

SHORT STORIES

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THE CONE*

by H. G. Wells

The night was hot and overcast, the sky red, rimmed with the lingering sunset of mid-summer. They sat at the open window, trying to fancy the air was fresher there. The trees and shrubs of the garden stood stiff and dark; beyond in the roadway a gas-lamp burnt, bright orange against the hazy blue of the evening. Farther were the three lights of the railway signal against the lowering sky. The man and woman spoke to one another in low tones.

"He does not suspect?" said the man, a little nervously.

"Not he," she said peevishly, as though that too irritated her. "He thinks of nothing but the works and the prices of fuel. He has no imagination, no poetry."

"None of these men of iron have," he said sententiously. "They have no hearts."

"_He_ has not," she said. She turned her discontented face towards the window. The distant sound of a roaring and rushing drew nearer and grew in volume; the house quivered; one heard the metallic rattle of the tender. As the train passed, there was a glare of light above the cutting and a driving tumult of smoke; one, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight black oblongs--eight trucks--passed across the dim grey of the embankment, and were suddenly extinguished one by one in the throat of the tunnel, which, with the last, seemed to swallow down train, smoke, and sound in one abrupt gulp.

"This country was all fresh and beautiful once," he said; "and now--it is Gehenna. Down that way--nothing but pot-banks and chimneys belching fire and dust into the face of heaven"

But what does it matter? An end comes, an end to all this cruelty
..... _To-morrow_." He spoke the last word in a whisper.

"_To-morrow_," she said, speaking in a whisper too, and still staring out of the window.

"Dear!" he said, putting his hand on hers.

She turned with a start, and their eyes searched one another's. Hers softened to his gaze. "My dear one!" she said, and then: "It seems so strange--that you should have come into my life like this--to open--" She paused.

"To open?" he said.

"All this wonderful world--" she hesitated, and spoke still more softly--"this world of _love_ to me."

Then suddenly the door clicked and closed. They turned their heads, and he started violently back. In the shadow of the room stood a great shadowy figure--silent. They saw the face dimly in the half-light, with unexpressive dark patches under the penthouse brows. Every muscle in Raut's body suddenly became tense. When could the door have opened? What had he heard? Had he heard all? What had he seen? A tumult of questions.

The new-comer's voice came at last, after a pause that seemed interminable. "Well?" he said.

"I was afraid I had missed you, Horrocks," said the man at the window, gripping the window-ledge with his hand. His voice was unsteady.

The clumsy figure of Horrocks came forward out of the shadow.

He made no answer to Raut's remark. For a moment he stood above them.

The woman's heart was cold within her. "I told Mr. Raut it was just possible you might come back," she said, in a voice that never quivered.

Horrocks, still silent, sat down abruptly in the chair by her little work-table. His big hands were clenched; one saw now the fire of his eyes under the shadow of his brows. He was trying to get his breath. His eyes went from the woman he had trusted to the friend he had trusted, and then back to the woman.

By this time and for the moment all three half understood one another. Yet none dared say a word to ease the pent-up things that choked them.

It was the husband's voice that broke the silence at last.

"You wanted to see me?" he said to Raut.

Raut started as he spoke. "I came to see you," he said, resolved to lie to the last.

"Yes," said Horrocks.

"You promised," said Raut, "to show me some fine effects of moonlight and smoke."

"I promised to show you some fine effects of moonlight and smoke," repeated Horrocks in a colourless voice.

"And I thought I might catch you to-night before you went down to the works," proceeded Raut, "and come with you."

There was another pause. Did the man mean to take the thing coolly? Did he after all know? How long had he been in the room? Yet even at the moment when they heard the door, their attitudes. . . . Horrocks glanced at the profile of the woman, shadowy pallid in the half-light. Then he glanced at Raut, and seemed to recover himself suddenly. "Of course," he said, "I promised to show you the works under their proper dramatic conditions. It's odd how I could have forgotten."

"If I am troubling you--" began Raut.

Horrocks started again. A new light had suddenly come into the sultry gloom of his eyes. "Not in the least," he said.

"Have you been telling Mr. Raut of all these contrasts of flame and shadow you think so splendid?" said the woman, turning now to her husband for the first time, her confidence creeping back again, her voice just one half-note too high. "That dreadful theory of yours that machinery is beautiful, and everything else in the world ugly. I thought he would not spare you, Mr. Raut. It's his great theory, his one discovery in art."

"I am slow to make discoveries," said Horrocks grimly, damping her suddenly. "But what I discover" He stopped.

"Well?" she said.

"Nothing;" and suddenly he rose to his feet.

"I promised to show you the works," he said to Raut, and put his big, clumsy hand on his friend's shoulder. "And you are ready to go?"

"Quite," said Raut, and stood up also.

There was another pause. Each of them peered through the indistinctness of the dusk at the other two. Horrocks' hand still rested on Raut's shoulder. Raut half fancied still that the incident was trivial after all. But Mrs. Horrocks knew her husband better, knew that grim quiet in his voice, and the confusion in her mind took a vague shape of physical evil. "Very well", said Horrocks, and, dropping his hand, turned towards the door.

"My hat?" Raut looked round in the half-light.

"That's my work-basket," said Mrs. Horrocks, with a gust of hysterical laughter. Their hands came together on the back of the chair. "Here it is!" he said. She had an impulse to warn him in an undertone, but she could not frame a word. "Don't go!" and "Beware of him!" struggled in her mind, and the swift moment passed.

"Got it?" said Horrocks, standing with the door half open.

Raut stepped towards him. "Better say good-bye to Mrs. Horrocks," said the ironmaster, even more grimly quiet in his tone than before.

Raut started and turned. "Good-evening, Mrs. Horrocks," he said, and their hands touched.

Horrocks held the door open with a ceremonial politeness unusual in him towards men. Raut went out, and then, after a wordless look at her, her husband followed. She stood motionless while Raut's light footfall and her husband's heavy tread, like bass and treble, passed down the passage together. The front door slammed heavily. She went to the window, moving slowly, and stood

watching--leaning forward. The two men appeared for a moment at the gateway in the road, passed under the street lamp, and were hidden by the black masses of the shrubbery. The lamp-light fell for a moment on their faces, showing only unmeaning pale patches, telling nothing of what she still feared, and doubted, and craved vainly to know. Then she sank down into a crouching attitude in the big arm-chair, her eyes wide open and staring out at the red lights from the furnaces that flickered in the sky. An hour after she was still there, her attitude scarcely changed.

The oppressive stillness of the evening weighed heavily upon Raut. They went side by side down the road in silence, and in silence turned into the cinder-made by-way that presently opened out the prospect of the valley.

A blue haze, half dust, half mist, touched the long valley with mystery. Beyond were Hanley and Etruria, grey and dark masses, outlined thinly by the rare golden dots of the street lamps, and here and there a gaslit window, or the yellow glare of some late-working factory or crowded public-house. Out of the masses, clear and slender against the evening sky, rose a multitude of tall chimneys, many of them reeking, a few smokeless during a season of "play." Here and there a pallid patch and ghostly stunted beehive shapes showed the position of a pot-bank, or a wheel, black and sharp against the hot lower sky, marked some colliery where they raise the iridescent coal of the place. Nearer at hand was the broad stretch of railway, and half invisible trains shunted--a steady puffing and rumbling, with every run a ringing concussion and a rhythmic series of impacts, and a passage of intermittent puffs of white steam across the further view. And to the left, between the railway and the dark mass of the low hill beyond, dominating the whole view, colossal, inky-black, and crowned with smoke and fitful flames, stood the great cylinders of the Jeddah Company Blast Furnaces, the central edifices of the big

ironworks of which Horrocks was the manager. They stood heavy and threatening, full of an incessant turmoil of flames and seething molten iron, and about the feet of them rattled the rolling-mills, and the steam hammer beat heavily and splashed the white iron sparks hither and thither. Even as they looked, a truckful of fuel was shot into one of the giants, and the red flames gleamed out, and a confusion of smoke and black dust came boiling upwards towards the sky.

"Certainly you get some fine effects of colour with your furnaces," said Raut, breaking a silence that had become apprehensive.

Horrocks grunted. He stood with his hands in his pockets, frowning down at the dim steaming railway and the busy ironworks beyond, frowning as if he were thinking out some knotty problem.

Raut glanced at him and away again. "At present your moonlight effect is hardly ripe," he continued, looking upward. "The moon is still smothered by the vestiges of daylight."

Horrocks stared at him with the expression of a man who has suddenly awakened. "Vestiges of daylight? . . . Of course, of course." He too looked up at the moon, pale still in the midsummer sky. "Come along," he said suddenly, and, gripping Raut's arm in his hand, made a move towards the path that dropped from them to the railway.

Raut hung back. Their eyes met and saw a thousand things in a moment that their eyes came near to say. Horrocks' hand tightened and then relaxed. He let go, and before Raut was aware of it, they were arm in arm, and walking, one unwillingly enough, down the path.

"You see the fine effect of the railway signals towards Burslem," said Horrocks, suddenly breaking into loquacity, striding fast, and tightening the grip of his elbow the while. "Little green lights and red and white lights, all against the haze. You have an eye for effect, Raut. It's a fine effect. And look at those furnaces of mine, how they rise upon us as we come down the hill. That to the right is my pet--seventy feet of him. I packed him myself, and he's boiled away cheerfully with iron in his guts for five long years. I've a particular fancy for _him_. That line of red there--a lovely bit of warm orange you'd call it, Raut--that's the puddlers' furnaces, and there, in the hot light, three black figures--did you see the white splash of the steam-hammer then?--that's the rolling mills. Come along! Clang, clatter, how it goes rattling across the floor! Sheet tin, Raut,--amazing stuff. Glass mirrors are not in it when that stuff comes from the mill. And, squelch!--there goes the hammer again. Come along!"

He had to stop talking to catch at his breath. His arm twisted into Raut's with benumbing tightness. He had come striding down the black path towards the railway as though he was possessed. Raut had not spoken a word, had simply hung back against Horrocks' pull with all his strength.

"I say," he said now, laughing nervously, but with an undertone of snarl in his voice, "why on earth are you nipping my arm off, Horrocks, and dragging me along like this?"

At length Horrocks released him. His manner changed again. "Nipping your arm off?" he said. "Sorry. But it's you taught me the trick of walking in that friendly way."

"You haven't learnt the refinements of it yet then," said Raut, laughing artificially again. "By Jove! I'm black and blue."

Horrocks offered no apology. They stood now near the bottom of the hill, close to the fence that bordered the railway. The ironworks had grown larger and spread out with their approach. They looked up to the blast furnaces now instead of down; the further view of Etruria and Hanley had dropped out of sight with their descent. Before them, by the stile rose a notice-board, bearing still dimly visible, the words, "BEWARE OF THE TRAINS," half hidden by splashes of coaly mud.

"Fine effects," said Horrocks, waving his arm. "Here comes a train. The puffs of smoke, the orange glare, the round eye of light in front of it, the melodious rattle. Fine effects! But these furnaces of mine used to be finer, before we shoved cones in their throats, and saved the gas."

"How?" said Raut. "Cones?"

"Cones, my man, cones. I'll show you one nearer. The flames used to flare out of the open throats, great--what is it?--pillars of cloud by day, red and black smoke, and pillars of fire by night. Now we run it off in pipes, and burn it to heat the blast, and the top is shut by a cone. You'll be interested in that cone."

"But every now and then," said Raut, "you get a burst of fire and smoke up there."

"The cone's not fixed, it's hung by a chain from a lever, and balanced by an equipoise. You shall see it nearer. Else, of course, there'd be no way of getting fuel into the thing. Every now and then the cone dips, and out comes the flare."

"I see," said Raut. He looked over his shoulder. "The moon gets brighter," he said.

"Come along," said Horrocks abruptly, gripping his shoulder again, and moving him suddenly towards the railway crossing. And then came one of those swift incidents, vivid, but so rapid that they leave one doubtful and reeling. Halfway across, Horrocks' hand suddenly clenched upon him like a vice, and swung him backward and through a half-turn, so that he looked up the line. And there a chain of lamp-lit carriage-windows telescoped swiftly as it came towards them, and the red and yellow lights of an engine grew larger and larger, rushing down upon them. As he grasped what this meant, he turned his face to Horrocks, and pushed with all his strength against the arm that held him back between the rails. The struggle did not last a moment. Just as certain as it was that Horrocks held him there, so certain was it that he had been violently lugged out of danger.

"Out of the way," said Horrocks, with a gasp, as the train came rattling by, and they stood panting by the gate into the ironworks.

"I did not see it coming," said Raut, still, even in spite of his own apprehensions, trying to keep up an appearance of ordinary intercourse.

Horrocks answered with a grunt. "The cone," he said, and then, as one who recovers himself, "I thought you did not hear."

"I didn't," said Raut.

"I wouldn't have had you run over then for the world," said Horrocks.

"For a moment I lost my nerve," said Raut.

Horrocks stood for half a minute, then turned abruptly towards

the ironworks again. "See how fine these great mounds of mine, these clinker-heaps, look in the night! That truck yonder, up above there! Up it goes, and out-tilts the slag. See the palpitating red stuff go sliding down the slope. As we get nearer, the heap rises up and cuts the blast furnaces. See the quiver up above the big one. Not that way! This way, between the heaps. That goes to the puddling furnaces, but I want to show you the canal first." He came and took Raut by the elbow, and so they went along side by side. Raut answered Horrocks vaguely. What, he asked himself, had really happened on the line? Was he deluding himself with his own fancies, or had Horrocks actually held him back in the way of the train? Had he just been within an ace of being murdered?

Suppose this slouching, scowling monster did know anything? For a minute or two then Raut was really afraid for his life, but the mood passed as he reasoned with himself. After all, Horrocks might have heard nothing. At any rate, he had pulled him out of the way in time. His odd manner might be due to the mere vague jealousy he had shown once before. He was talking now of the ash-heaps and the canal. "Eigh?" said Horrocks.

"What?" said Raut. "Rather! The haze in the moonlight. Fine!"

"Our canal," said Horrocks, stopping suddenly. "Our canal by moonlight and firelight is an immense effect. You've never seen it? Fancy that! You've spent too many of your evenings philandering up in Newcastle there. I tell you, for real florid effects--But you shall see. Boiling water . . ."

As they came out of the labyrinth of clinker-heaps and mounds of coal and ore, the noises of the rolling-mill sprang upon them suddenly, loud, near, and distinct. Three shadowy workmen went by and touched their caps to Horrocks. Their faces were vague in the

darkness. Raut felt a futile impulse to address them, and before he could frame his words, they passed into the shadows. Horrocks pointed to the canal close before them now: a weird-looking place it seemed, in the blood-red reflections of the furnaces. The hot water that cooled the tuyeres came into it, some fifty yards up--a tumultuous, almost boiling affluent, and the steam rose up from the water in silent white wisps and streaks, wrapping damply about them, an incessant succession of ghosts coming up from the black and red eddies, a white uprising that made the head swim. The shining black tower of the larger blast-furnace rose overhead out of the mist, and its tumultuous riot filled their ears. Raut kept away from the edge of the water, and watched Horrocks.

"Here it is red," said Horrocks, "blood-red vapour as red and hot as sin; but yonder there, where the moonlight falls on it, and it drives across the clinker-heaps, it is as white as death."

Raut turned his head for a moment, and then came back hastily to his watch on Horrocks. "Come along to the rolling-mills," said Horrocks. The threatening hold was not so evident that time, and Raut felt a little reassured. But all the same, what on earth did Horrocks mean about "white as death" and "red as sin?" Coincidence, perhaps?

They went and stood behind the puddlers for a little while, and then through the rolling-mills, where amidst an incessant din the deliberate steam-hammer beat the juice out of the succulent iron, and black, half-naked Titans rushed the plastic bars, like hot sealing-wax, between the wheels. "Come on," said Horrocks in Raut's ear, and they went and peeped through the little glass hole behind the tuyeres, and saw the tumbled fire writhing in the pit of the blast-furnace. It left one eye blinded for a while. Then, with green and blue patches dancing across the dark, they went to the lift by which the trucks of ore and fuel and lime were raised

to the top of the big cylinder.

And out upon the narrow rail that overhung the furnace, Raut's doubts came upon him again. Was it wise to be here? If Horrocks did know--everything! Do what he would, he could not resist a violent trembling. Right under foot was a sheer depth of seventy feet. It was a dangerous place. They pushed by a truck of fuel to get to the railing that crowned the place. The reek of the furnace, a sulphurous vapor streaked with pungent bitterness, seemed to make the distant hillside of Hanley quiver. The moon was riding out now from among a drift of clouds, halfway up the sky above the undulating wooded outlines of Newcastle. The steaming canal ran away from below them under an indistinct bridge, and vanished into the dim haze of the flat fields towards Burslem.

"That's the cone I've been telling you of," shouted Horrocks; "and, below that, sixty feet of fire and molten metal, with the air of the blast frothing through it like gas in soda-water."

Raut gripped the hand-rail tightly, and stared down at the cone. The heat was intense. The boiling of the iron and the tumult of the blast made a thunderous accompaniment to Horrocks' voice. But the thing had to be gone through now. Perhaps, after all . . .

"In the middle," bawled Horrocks, "temperature near a thousand degrees. If you were dropped into it . . . flash into flame like a pinch of gunpowder in a candle. Put your hand out and feel the heat of his breath. Why, even up here I've seen the rain-water boiling off the trucks. And that cone there. It's a damned sight too hot for roasting cakes. The top side of it's three hundred degrees."

"Three hundred degrees!" said Raut.

"Three hundred centigrade, mind!" said Horrocks. "It will boil the blood out of you in no time."

"Eigh?" said Raut, and turned.

"Boil the blood out of you in . . . No, you don't!"

"Let me go!" screamed Raut. "Let go my arm!"

With one hand he clutched at the hand-rail, then with both. For a moment the two men stood swaying. Then suddenly, with a violent jerk, Horrocks had twisted him from his hold. He clutched at Horrocks and missed, his foot went back into empty air; in mid-air he twisted himself, and then cheek and shoulder and knee struck the hot cone together.

He clutched the chain by which the cone hung, and the thing sank an infinitesimal amount as he struck it. A circle of glowing red appeared about him, and a tongue of flame, released from the chaos within, flickered up towards him. An intense pain assailed him at the knees, and he could smell the singeing of his hands. He raised himself to his feet, and tried to climb up the chain, and then something struck his head. Black and shining with the moonlight, the throat of the furnace rose about him.

Horrocks, he saw, stood above him by one of the trucks of fuel on the rail. The gesticulating figure was bright and white in the moonlight, and shouting, "Fizz!e, you fool! Fizz!e, you hunter of women! You hot-blooded hound! Boil! boil! boil!"

Suddenly he caught up a handful of coal out of the truck, and flung it deliberately, lump after lump, at Raut.

"Horrocks!" cried Raut. "Horrocks!"

He clung crying to the chain, pulling himself up from the burning of the cone. Each missile Horrocks flung hit him. His clothes charred and glowed, and as he struggled the cone dropped, and a rush of hot suffocating gas whooped out and burned round him in a swift breath of flame.

His human likeness departed from him. When the momentary red had passed, Horrocks saw a charred, blackened figure, its head streaked with blood, still clutching and fumbling with the chain, and writhing in agony--a cindery animal, an inhuman, monstrous creature that began a sobbing intermittent shriek.

Abruptly, at the sight, the ironmaster's anger passed. A deadly sickness came upon him. The heavy odour of burning flesh came drifting up to his nostrils. His sanity returned to him.

"God have mercy upon me!" he cried. "O God! what have I done?"

He knew the thing below him, save that it still moved and felt, was already a dead man--that the blood of the poor wretch must be boiling in his veins. An intense realisation of that agony came to his mind, and overcame every other feeling. For a moment he stood irresolute, and then, turning to the truck, he hastily tilted its contents upon the struggling thing that had once been a man. The mass fell with a thud, and went radiating over the cone. With the thud the shriek ended, and a boiling confusion of smoke, dust, and flame came rushing up towards him. As it passed, he saw the cone clear again.

Then he staggered back, and stood trembling, clinging to the rail with both hands. His lips moved, but no words came to them.

Down below was the sound of voices and running steps. The clangour of rolling in the shed ceased abruptly.

*from Project Gutenberg's EBook #456

The Door in the Wall And Other Stories, by H. G. Wells

FRANCIS WOOLCOTT'S NIGHT-RIDERS+

by Charles M. Skinner

In Copake, New York, among the Berkshire Hills, less than a century ago, lived Francis Woolcott, a dark, tall man, with protruding teeth, whose sinister laugh used to give his neighbors a creep along their spines. He had no obvious trade or calling, but the farmers feared him so that he had no trouble in making levies: pork, flour, meal, cider, he could have what he chose for the asking, for had he not halted horses at the plow so that neither blows nor commands could move them for two hours? Had he not set farmer Raught's pigs to walking on their hind legs and trying to talk? When he shouted "Hup! hup! hup!" to farmer Williams's children, had they not leaped to the moulding of the parlor wainscot,—a yard above the floor and only an inch wide,—and walked around it, afterward skipping like birds from chair-back to chair-back, while the furniture stood as if nailed to the floor? And was he not the chief of thirteen night-riders, whose faces no man had seen, nor wanted to see, and whom he sent about the country on errands of mischief every night when the moon was growing old? As to moons, had he not found a mystic message from our satellite on Mount Riga, graven on a meteor?

Horses' tails were tied, hogs foamed at the mouth and walked like men, cows gave blood for milk. These night-riders met Woolcott in a grove of ash and chestnut trees, each furnished with a stolen bundle of oat straw, and these bundles Woolcott changed to black horses when the night had grown dark enough not to let the way of the change be seen. These horses could not cross streams of water, and on the stroke of midnight they fell to pieces and were oaten sheaves once more, but during their time of action they rushed through woods, bearing their riders safely, and tore like hurricanes across the fields, leaping bushes, fences, even trees, without effort. Never could traces be found of them the next day. At last the devil came to claim his own. Woolcott, who was ninety years old, lay sick and helpless in his cabin. Clergymen refused to see him, but two or three of his neighbors stifled their fears and went to the wizard's house to soothe his

dying moments. With the night came storm, and with its outbreak the old man's face took on such a strange and horrible look that the watchers fell back in alarm. There was a burst of purple flame at the window, a frightful peal, a smell of sulphur, and Woolcott was dead. When the watchers went out the roads were dry, and none in the village had heard wind, rain, or thunder. It was the coming of the fiend.

THE WIND IN THE ROSE-BUSH*

by Mary Wilkins Freeman

Ford Village has no railroad station, being on the other side of the river from Porter's Falls, and accessible only by the ford which gives it its name, and a ferry line.

The ferry-boat was waiting when Rebecca Flint got off the train with her bag and lunch basket. When she and her small trunk were safely embarked she sat stiff and straight and calm in the ferry-boat as it shot swiftly and smoothly across stream. There was a horse attached to a light country wagon on board, and he pawed the deck uneasily. His owner stood near, with a wary eye upon him, although he was chewing, with as dully reflective an expression as a cow. Beside Rebecca sat a woman of about her own age, who kept looking at her with furtive curiosity; her husband, short and stout and saturnine, stood near her. Rebecca paid no attention to either of them. She was tall and spare and pale, the type of a spinster, yet with rudimentary lines and expressions of matronhood. She all unconsciously held her shawl, rolled up in a canvas bag, on her left hip, as if it had been a child. She wore a settled frown of dissent at life, but it was the frown of a mother who regarded life as a froward child, rather than as an overwhelming fate.

The other woman continued staring at her; she was mildly stupid, except for an over-developed curiosity which made her at times sharp beyond belief. Her eyes glittered, red spots came on her flaccid cheeks; she kept opening her mouth to speak, making little abortive motions. Finally she could endure it no longer; she nudged Rebecca boldly.

"A pleasant day," said she.

Rebecca looked at her and nodded coldly.

"Yes, very," she assented.

"Have you come far?"

"I have come from Michigan."

"Oh!" said the woman, with awe. "It's a long way," she remarked presently.

"Yes, it is," replied Rebecca, conclusively.

Still the other woman was not daunted; there was something which she determined to know, possibly roused thereto by a vague sense of incongruity in the other's appearance. "It's a long ways to come and leave a family," she remarked with painful slyness.

"I ain't got any family to leave," returned Rebecca shortly.

"Then you ain't--"

"No, I ain't."

"Oh!" said the woman.

Rebecca looked straight ahead at the race of the river.

It was a long ferry. Finally Rebecca herself waxed unexpectedly loquacious. She turned to the other woman and inquired if she knew John Dent's widow who lived in Ford Village. "Her husband died about three years ago," said she, by way of detail.

The woman started violently. She turned pale, then she flushed; she cast a strange glance at her husband, who was regarding both women with a sort of stolid keenness.

"Yes, I guess I do," faltered the woman finally.

"Well, his first wife was my sister," said Rebecca with the air of one imparting important intelligence.

"Was she?" responded the other woman feebly. She glanced at her husband with an expression of doubt and terror, and he shook his head forbiddingly.

"I'm going to see her, and take my niece Agnes home with me," said Rebecca.

Then the woman gave such a violent start that she noticed it.

"What is the matter?" she asked.

"Nothin', I guess," replied the woman, with eyes on her husband, who was slowly shaking his head, like a Chinese toy.

"Is my niece sick?" asked Rebecca with quick suspicion.

"No, she ain't sick," replied the woman with alacrity, then she caught her breath with a gasp.

"When did you see her?"

"Let me see; I ain't seen her for some little time," replied the woman. Then she caught her breath again.

"She ought to have grown up real pretty, if she takes after my sister. She was a real pretty woman," Rebecca said wistfully.

"Yes, I guess she did grow up pretty," replied the woman in a trembling

voice.

"What kind of a woman is the second wife?"

The woman glanced at her husband's warning face. She continued to gaze at him while she replied in a choking voice to Rebecca:

"I--guess she's a nice woman," she replied. "I--don't know, I--guess so. I--don't see much of her."

"I felt kind of hurt that John married again so quick," said Rebecca; "but I suppose he wanted his house kept, and Agnes wanted care. I wasn't so situated that I could take her when her mother died. I had my own mother to care for, and I was school-teaching. Now mother has gone, and my uncle died six months ago and left me quite a little property, and I've given up my school, and I've come for Agnes. I guess she'll be glad to go with me, though I suppose her stepmother is a good woman, and has always done for her."

The man's warning shake at his wife was fairly portentous.

"I guess so," said she.

"John always wrote that she was a beautiful woman," said Rebecca.

Then the ferry-boat grated on the shore.

John Dent's widow had sent a horse and wagon to meet her sister-in-law. When the woman and her husband went down the road, on which Rebecca in the wagon with her trunk soon passed them, she said reproachfully:

"Seems as if I'd ought to have told her, Thomas."

"Let her find it out herself," replied the man. "Don't you go to burnin' your fingers in other folks' puddin', Maria."

"Do you s'pose she'll see anything?" asked the woman with a spasmodic shudder and a terrified roll of her eyes.

"See!" returned her husband with stolid scorn. "Better be sure there's anything to see."

"Oh, Thomas, they say--"

"Lord, ain't you found out that what they say is mostly lies?"

"But if it should be true, and she's a nervous woman, she might be scared enough to lose her wits," said his wife, staring uneasily after Rebecca's erect figure in the wagon disappearing over the crest of the hilly road.

"Wits that so easy upset ain't worth much," declared the man. "You keep out of it, Maria."

Rebecca in the meantime rode on in the wagon, beside a flaxen-headed boy, who looked, to her understanding, not very bright. She asked him a question, and he paid no attention. She repeated it, and he responded with a bewildered and incoherent grunt. Then she let him alone, after making sure that he knew how to drive straight.

They had traveled about half a mile, passed the village square, and gone a short distance beyond, when the boy drew up with a sudden Whoa! before a very prosperous-looking house. It had been one of the aboriginal cottages of the vicinity, small and white, with a roof extending on one side over a piazza, and a tiny "L" jutting out in the rear, on the right hand. Now the cottage was transformed by dormer

windows, a bay window on the piazzaless side, a carved railing down the front steps, and a modern hard-wood door.

"Is this John Dent's house?" asked Rebecca.

The boy was as sparing of speech as a philosopher. His only response was in flinging the reins over the horse's back, stretching out one foot to the shaft, and leaping out of the wagon, then going around to the rear for the trunk. Rebecca got out and went toward the house. Its white paint had a new gloss; its blinds were an immaculate apple green; the lawn was trimmed as smooth as velvet, and it was dotted with scrupulous groups of hydrangeas and cannas.

"I always understood that John Dent was well-to-do," Rebecca reflected comfortably. "I guess Agnes will have considerable. I've got enough, but it will come in handy for her schooling. She can have advantages."

The boy dragged the trunk up the fine gravel-walk, but before he reached the steps leading up to the piazza, for the house stood on a terrace, the front door opened and a fair, frizzled head of a very large and handsome woman appeared. She held up her black silk skirt, disclosing voluminous ruffles of starched embroidery, and waited for Rebecca. She smiled placidly, her pink, double-chinned face widened and dimpled, but her blue eyes were wary and calculating. She extended her hand as Rebecca climbed the steps.

"This is Miss Flint, I suppose," said she.

"Yes, ma'am," replied Rebecca, noticing with bewilderment a curious expression compounded of fear and defiance on the other's face.

"Your letter only arrived this morning," said Mrs. Dent, in a steady voice. Her great face was a uniform pink, and her china-blue eyes were at once aggressive and veiled with secrecy.

"Yes, I hardly thought you'd get my letter," replied Rebecca. "I felt as if I could not wait to hear from you before I came. I supposed you would be so situated that you could have me a little while without putting you out too much, from what John used to write me about his circumstances, and when I had that money so unexpected I felt as if I must come for Agnes. I suppose you will be willing to give her up. You know she's my own blood, and of course she's no relation to you, though you must have got attached to her. I know from her picture what a sweet girl she must be, and John always said she looked like her own mother, and Grace was a beautiful woman, if she was my sister."

Rebecca stopped and stared at the other woman in amazement and alarm. The great handsome blonde creature stood speechless, livid, gasping, with her hand to her heart, her lips parted in a horrible caricature of a smile.

"Are you sick!" cried Rebecca, drawing near. "Don't you want me to get you some water!"

Then Mrs. Dent recovered herself with a great effort. "It is nothing," she said. "I am subject to--spells. I am over it now. Won't you come in, Miss Flint?"

As she spoke, the beautiful deep-rose colour suffused her face, her blue eyes met her visitor's with the opaqueness of turquoise--with a revelation of blue, but a concealment of all behind.

Rebecca followed her hostess in, and the boy, who had waited quiescently, climbed the steps with the trunk. But before they entered the door a strange thing happened. On the upper terrace close to the piazza-post, grew a great rose-bush, and on it, late in the season though it was, one small red, perfect rose.

Rebecca looked at it, and the other woman extended her hand with a quick gesture. "Don't you pick that rose!" she brusquely cried.

Rebecca drew herself up with stiff dignity.

"I ain't in the habit of picking other folks' roses without leave," said she.

As Rebecca spoke she started violently, and lost sight of her resentment, for something singular happened. Suddenly the rose-bush was agitated violently as if by a gust of wind, yet it was a remarkably still day. Not a leaf of the hydrangea standing on the terrace close to the rose trembled.

"What on earth--" began Rebecca, then she stopped with a gasp at the sight of the other woman's face. Although a face, it gave somehow the impression of a desperately clutched hand of secrecy.

"Come in!" said she in a harsh voice, which seemed to come forth from her chest with no intervention of the organs of speech. "Come into the house. I'm getting cold out here."

"What makes that rose-bush blow so when there isn't any wind?" asked Rebecca, trembling with vague horror, yet resolute.

"I don't see as it is blowing," returned the woman calmly. And as she spoke, indeed, the bush was quiet.

"It was blowing," declared Rebecca.

"It isn't now," said Mrs. Dent. "I can't try to account for everything that blows out-of-doors. I have too much to do."

She spoke scornfully and confidently, with defiant, unflinching eyes,

first on the bush, then on Rebecca, and led the way into the house.

"It looked queer," persisted Rebecca, but she followed, and also the boy with the trunk.

Rebecca entered an interior, prosperous, even elegant, according to her simple ideas. There were Brussels carpets, lace curtains, and plenty of brilliant upholstery and polished wood.

"You're real nicely situated," remarked Rebecca, after she had become a little accustomed to her new surroundings and the two women were seated at the tea-table.

Mrs. Dent stared with a hard complacency from behind her silver-plated service. "Yes, I be," said she.

"You got all the things new?" said Rebecca hesitatingly, with a jealous memory of her dead sister's bridal furnishings.

"Yes," said Mrs. Dent; "I was never one to want dead folks' things, and I had money enough of my own, so I wasn't beholden to John. I had the old duds put up at auction. They didn't bring much."

"I suppose you saved some for Agnes. She'll want some of her poor mother's things when she is grown up," said Rebecca with some indignation.

The defiant stare of Mrs. Dent's blue eyes waxed more intense. "There's a few things up garret," said she.

"She'll be likely to value them," remarked Rebecca. As she spoke she glanced at the window. "Isn't it most time for her to be coming home?" she asked.

"Most time," answered Mrs. Dent carelessly; "but when she gets over to Addie Slocum's she never knows when to come home."

"Is Addie Slocum her intimate friend?"

"Intimate as any."

"Maybe we can have her come out to see Agnes when she's living with me," said Rebecca wistfully. "I suppose she'll be likely to be homesick at first."

"Most likely," answered Mrs. Dent.

"Does she call you mother?" Rebecca asked.

"No, she calls me Aunt Emeline," replied the other woman shortly. "When did you say you were going home?"

"In about a week, I thought, if she can be ready to go so soon," answered Rebecca with a surprised look.

She reflected that she would not remain a day longer than she could help after such an inhospitable look and question.

"Oh, as far as that goes," said Mrs. Dent, "it wouldn't make any difference about her being ready. You could go home whenever you felt that you must, and she could come afterward."

"Alone?"

"Why not? She's a big girl now, and you don't have to change cars."

"My niece will go home when I do, and not travel alone; and if I can't wait here for her, in the house that used to be her mother's and my

sister's home, I'll go and board somewhere," returned Rebecca with warmth.

"Oh, you can stay here as long as you want to. You're welcome," said Mrs. Dent.

Then Rebecca started. "There she is!" she declared in a trembling, exultant voice. Nobody knew how she longed to see the girl.

"She isn't as late as I thought she'd be," said Mrs. Dent, and again that curious, subtle change passed over her face, and again it settled into that stony impassiveness.

Rebecca stared at the door, waiting for it to open. "Where is she?" she asked presently.

"I guess she's stopped to take off her hat in the entry," suggested Mrs. Dent.

Rebecca waited. "Why don't she come? It can't take her all this time to take off her hat."

For answer Mrs. Dent rose with a stiff jerk and threw open the door.

"Agnes!" she called. "Agnes!" Then she turned and eyed Rebecca. "She ain't there."

"I saw her pass the window," said Rebecca in bewilderment.

"You must have been mistaken."

"I know I did," persisted Rebecca.

"You couldn't have."

"I did. I saw first a shadow go over the ceiling, then I saw her in the glass there"--she pointed to a mirror over the sideboard opposite--"and then the shadow passed the window."

"How did she look in the glass?"

"Little and light-haired, with the light hair kind of tossing over her forehead."

"You couldn't have seen her."

"Was that like Agnes?"

"Like enough; but of course you didn't see her. You've been thinking so much about her that you thought you did."

"You thought YOU did."

"I thought I saw a shadow pass the window, but I must have been mistaken. She didn't come in, or we would have seen her before now. I knew it was too early for her to get home from Addie Slocum's, anyhow."

When Rebecca went to bed Agnes had not returned. Rebecca had resolved

that she would not retire until the girl came, but she was very tired, and she reasoned with herself that she was foolish. Besides, Mrs. Dent suggested that Agnes might go to the church social with Addie Slocum. When Rebecca suggested that she be sent for and told that her aunt had come, Mrs. Dent laughed meaningly.

"I guess you'll find out that a young girl ain't so ready to leave a sociable, where there's boys, to see her aunt," said she.

"She's too young," said Rebecca incredulously and indignantly.

"She's sixteen," replied Mrs. Dent; "and she's always been great for the boys."

"She's going to school four years after I get her before she thinks of boys," declared Rebecca.

"We'll see," laughed the other woman.

After Rebecca went to bed, she lay awake a long time listening for the sound of girlish laughter and a boy's voice under her window; then she fell asleep.

The next morning she was down early. Mrs. Dent, who kept no servants, was busily preparing breakfast.

"Don't Agnes help you about breakfast?" asked Rebecca.

"No, I let her lay," replied Mrs. Dent shortly.

"What time did she get home last night?"

"She didn't get home."

"What?"

"She didn't get home. She stayed with Addie. She often does."

"Without sending you word?"

"Oh, she knew I wouldn't worry."

"When will she be home?"

"Oh, I guess she'll be along pretty soon."

Rebecca was uneasy, but she tried to conceal it, for she knew of no good reason for uneasiness. What was there to occasion alarm in the fact of one young girl staying overnight with another? She could not eat much breakfast. Afterward she went out on the little piazza, although her hostess strove furtively to stop her.

"Why don't you go out back of the house? It's real pretty--a view over the river," she said.

"I guess I'll go out here," replied Rebecca. She had a purpose: to watch for the absent girl.

Presently Rebecca came hustling into the house through the sitting-room, into the kitchen where Mrs. Dent was cooking.

"That rose-bush!" she gasped.

Mrs. Dent turned and faced her.

"What of it?"

"It's a-blowing."

"What of it?"

"There isn't a mite of wind this morning."

Mrs. Dent turned with an inimitable toss of her fair head. "If you think I can spend my time puzzling over such nonsense as--" she began, but Rebecca interrupted her with a cry and a rush to the door.

"There she is now!" she cried. She flung the door wide open, and curiously enough a breeze came in and her own gray hair tossed, and a paper blew off the table to the floor with a loud rustle, but there was nobody in sight.

"There's nobody here," Rebecca said.

She looked blankly at the other woman, who brought her rolling-pin down on a slab of pie-crust with a thud.

"I didn't hear anybody," she said calmly.

"I SAW SOMEBODY PASS THAT WINDOW!"

"You were mistaken again."

"I KNOW I saw somebody."

"You couldn't have. Please shut that door."

Rebecca shut the door. She sat down beside the window and looked out on the autumnal yard, with its little curve of footpath to the kitchen door.

"What smells so strong of roses in this room?" she said presently. She sniffed hard.

"I don't smell anything but these nutmegs."

"It is not nutmeg."

"I don't smell anything else."

"Where do you suppose Agnes is?"

"Oh, perhaps she has gone over the ferry to Porter's Falls with Addie. She often does. Addie's got an aunt over there, and Addie's got a cousin, a real pretty boy."

"You suppose she's gone over there?"

"Mebbe. I shouldn't wonder."

"When should she be home?"

"Oh, not before afternoon."

Rebecca waited with all the patience she could muster. She kept reassuring herself, telling herself that it was all natural, that the other woman could not help it, but she made up her mind that if Agnes did not return that afternoon she should be sent for.

When it was four o'clock she started up with resolution. She had been furtively watching the onyx clock on the sitting-room mantel; she had timed herself. She had said that if Agnes was not home by that time she should demand that she be sent for. She rose and stood before Mrs. Dent, who looked up coolly from her embroidery.

"I've waited just as long as I'm going to," she said. "I've come 'way from Michigan to see my own sister's daughter and take her home with me. I've been here ever since yesterday--twenty-four hours--and I haven't seen her. Now I'm going to. I want her sent for."

Mrs. Dent folded her embroidery and rose.

"Well, I don't blame you," she said. "It is high time she came home. I'll go right over and get her myself."

Rebecca heaved a sigh of relief. She hardly knew what she had suspected or feared, but she knew that her position had been one of antagonism if not accusation, and she was sensible of relief.

"I wish you would," she said gratefully, and went back to her chair, while Mrs. Dent got her shawl and her little white head-tie. "I wouldn't trouble you, but I do feel as if I couldn't wait any longer to see her," she remarked apologetically.

"Oh, it ain't any trouble at all," said Mrs. Dent as she went out. "I don't blame you; you have waited long enough."

Rebecca sat at the window watching breathlessly until Mrs. Dent came stepping through the yard alone. She ran to the door and saw, hardly noticing it this time, that the rose-bush was again violently agitated, yet with no wind evident elsewhere.

"Where is she?" she cried.

Mrs. Dent laughed with stiff lips as she came up the steps over the terrace. "Girls will be girls," said she. "She's gone with Addie to Lincoln. Addie's got an uncle who's conductor on the train, and lives there, and he got 'em passes, and they're goin' to stay to Addie's Aunt Margaret's a few days. Mrs. Slocum said Agnes didn't have time to come over and ask me before the train went, but she took it on herself to say it would be all right, and--"

"Why hadn't she been over to tell you?" Rebecca was angry, though not suspicious. She even saw no reason for her anger.

"Oh, she was putting up grapes. She was coming over just as soon as she got the black off her hands. She heard I had company, and her hands were a sight. She was holding them over sulphur matches."

"You say she's going to stay a few days?" repeated Rebecca dazedly.

"Yes; till Thursday, Mrs. Slocum said."

"How far is Lincoln from here?"

"About fifty miles. It'll be a real treat to her. Mrs. Slocum's sister is a real nice woman."

"It is goin' to make it pretty late about my goin' home."

"If you don't feel as if you could wait, I'll get her ready and send her on just as soon as I can," Mrs. Dent said sweetly.

"I'm going to wait," said Rebecca grimly.

The two women sat down again, and Mrs. Dent took up her embroidery.

"Is there any sewing I can do for her?" Rebecca asked finally in a desperate way. "If I can get her sewing along some--"

Mrs. Dent arose with alacrity and fetched a mass of white from the closet. "Here," she said, "if you want to sew the lace on this nightgown. I was going to put her to it, but she'll be glad enough to get rid of it. She ought to have this and one more before she goes. I don't like to send her away without some good underclothing."

Rebecca snatched at the little white garment and sewed feverishly.

That night she wakened from a deep sleep a little after midnight and lay a minute trying to collect her faculties and explain to herself what she was listening to. At last she discovered that it was the then popular strains of "The Maiden's Prayer" floating up through the floor from the piano in the sitting-room below. She jumped up, threw a shawl

over her nightgown, and hurried downstairs trembling. There was nobody in the sitting-room; the piano was silent. She ran to Mrs. Dent's bedroom and called hysterically:

"Emeline! Emeline!"

"What is it?" asked Mrs. Dent's voice from the bed. The voice was stern, but had a note of consciousness in it.

"Who--who was that playing 'The Maiden's Prayer' in the sitting-room, on the piano?"

"I didn't hear anybody."

"There was some one."

"I didn't hear anything."

"I tell you there was some one. But--THERE AIN'T ANYBODY THERE."

"I didn't hear anything."

"I did--somebody playing 'The Maiden's Prayer' on the piano. Has Agnes got home? I WANT TO KNOW."

"Of course Agnes hasn't got home," answered Mrs. Dent with rising inflection. "Be you gone crazy over that girl? The last boat from Porter's Falls was in before we went to bed. Of course she ain't come."

"I heard--"

"You were dreaming."

"I wasn't; I was broad awake."

Rebecca went back to her chamber and kept her lamp burning all night.

The next morning her eyes upon Mrs. Dent were wary and blazing with suppressed excitement. She kept opening her mouth as if to speak, then frowning, and setting her lips hard. After breakfast she went upstairs, and came down presently with her coat and bonnet.

"Now, Emeline," she said, "I want to know where the Slocums live."

Mrs. Dent gave a strange, long, half-lidded glance at her. She was finishing her coffee.

"Why?" she asked.

"I'm going over there and find out if they have heard anything from her daughter and Agnes since they went away. I don't like what I heard last night."

"You must have been dreaming."

"It don't make any odds whether I was or not. Does she play 'The Maiden's Prayer' on the piano? I want to know."

"What if she does? She plays it a little, I believe. I don't know. She don't half play it, anyhow; she ain't got an ear."

"That wasn't half played last night. I don't like such things happening. I ain't superstitious, but I don't like it. I'm going. Where do the Slocums live?"

"You go down the road over the bridge past the old grist mill, then you turn to the left; it's the only house for half a mile. You can't miss it. It has a barn with a ship in full sail on the cupola."

"Well, I'm going. I don't feel easy."

About two hours later Rebecca returned. There were red spots on her cheeks. She looked wild. "I've been there," she said, "and there isn't a soul at home. Something HAS happened."

"What has happened?"

"I don't know. Something. I had a warning last night. There wasn't a soul there. They've been sent for to Lincoln."

"Did you see anybody to ask?" asked Mrs. Dent with thinly concealed anxiety.

"I asked the woman that lives on the turn of the road. She's stone deaf. I suppose you know. She listened while I screamed at her to know where the Slocums were, and then she said, 'Mrs. Smith don't live here.' I didn't see anybody on the road, and that's the only house. What do you suppose it means?"

"I don't suppose it means much of anything," replied Mrs. Dent coolly.

"Mr. Slocum is conductor on the railroad, and he'd be away anyway, and Mrs. Slocum often goes early when he does, to spend the day with her sister in Porter's Falls. She'd be more likely to go away than Addie."

"And you don't think anything has happened?" Rebecca asked with diminishing distrust before the reasonableness of it.

"Land, no!"

Rebecca went upstairs to lay aside her coat and bonnet. But she came hurrying back with them still on.

"Who's been in my room?" she gasped. Her face was pale as ashes.

Mrs. Dent also paled as she regarded her.

"What do you mean?" she asked slowly.

"I found when I went upstairs that--little nightgown of--Agnes's on--the bed, laid out. It was--LAID OUT. The sleeves were folded across the bosom, and there was that little red rose between them. Emeline, what is it? Emeline, what's the matter? Oh!"

Mrs. Dent was struggling for breath in great, choking gasps. She clung to the back of a chair. Rebecca, trembling herself so she could scarcely keep on her feet, got her some water.

As soon as she recovered herself Mrs. Dent regarded her with eyes full of the strangest mixture of fear and horror and hostility.

"What do you mean talking so?" she said in a hard voice.

"It IS THERE."

"Nonsense. You threw it down and it fell that way."

"It was folded in my bureau drawer."

"It couldn't have been."

"Who picked that red rose?"

"Look on the bush," Mrs. Dent replied shortly.

Rebecca looked at her; her mouth gaped. She hurried out of the room. When she came back her eyes seemed to protrude. (She had in the

meantime hastened upstairs, and come down with tottering steps, clinging to the banisters.)

"Now I want to know what all this means?" she demanded.

"What what means?"

"The rose is on the bush, and it's gone from the bed in my room! Is this house haunted, or what?"

"I don't know anything about a house being haunted. I don't believe in such things. Be you crazy?" Mrs. Dent spoke with gathering force. The colour flashed back to her cheeks.

"No," said Rebecca shortly. "I ain't crazy yet, but I shall be if this keeps on much longer. I'm going to find out where that girl is before night."

Mrs. Dent eyed her.

"What be you going to do?"

"I'm going to Lincoln."

A faint triumphant smile overspread Mrs. Dent's large face.

"You can't," said she; "there ain't any train."

"No train?"

"No; there ain't any afternoon train from the Falls to Lincoln."

"Then I'm going over to the Slocums' again to-night."

However, Rebecca did not go; such a rain came up as deterred even her resolution, and she had only her best dresses with her. Then in the evening came the letter from the Michigan village which she had left nearly a week ago. It was from her cousin, a single woman, who had come to keep her house while she was away. It was a pleasant unexciting letter enough, all the first of it, and related mostly how she missed Rebecca; how she hoped she was having pleasant weather and

kept her health; and how her friend, Mrs. Greenaway, had come to stay with her since she had felt lonesome the first night in the house; how she hoped Rebecca would have no objections to this, although nothing had been said about it, since she had not realized that she might be nervous alone. The cousin was painfully conscientious, hence the letter. Rebecca smiled in spite of her disturbed mind as she read it, then her eye caught the postscript. That was in a different hand, purporting to be written by the friend, Mrs. Hannah Greenaway, informing her that the cousin had fallen down the cellar stairs and broken her hip, and was in a dangerous condition, and begging Rebecca to return at once, as she herself was rheumatic and unable to nurse her properly, and no one else could be obtained.

Rebecca looked at Mrs. Dent, who had come to her room with the letter quite late; it was half-past nine, and she had gone upstairs for the night.

"Where did this come from?" she asked.

"Mr. Amblecrom brought it," she replied.

"Who's he?"

"The postmaster. He often brings the letters that come on the late mail. He knows I ain't anybody to send. He brought yours about your coming. He said he and his wife came over on the ferry-boat with you."

"I remember him," Rebecca replied shortly. "There's bad news in this letter."

Mrs. Dent's face took on an expression of serious inquiry.

"Yes, my Cousin Harriet has fallen down the cellar stairs--they were always dangerous--and she's broken her hip, and I've got to take the first train home to-morrow."

"You don't say so. I'm dreadfully sorry."

"No, you ain't sorry!" said Rebecca, with a look as if she leaped.

"You're glad. I don't know why, but you're glad. You've wanted to get rid of me for some reason ever since I came. I don't know why. You're a strange woman. Now you've got your way, and I hope you're satisfied."

"How you talk."

Mrs. Dent spoke in a faintly injured voice, but there was a light in her eyes.

"I talk the way it is. Well, I'm going to-morrow morning, and I want you, just as soon as Agnes Dent comes home, to send her out to me. Don't you wait for anything. You pack what clothes she's got, and don't wait even to mend them, and you buy her ticket. I'll leave the money, and you send her along. She don't have to change cars. You start her off, when she gets home, on the next train!"

"Very well," replied the other woman. She had an expression of covert amusement.

"Mind you do it."

"Very well, Rebecca."

Rebecca started on her journey the next morning. When she arrived, two days later, she found her cousin in perfect health. She found, moreover, that the friend had not written the postscript in the cousin's letter. Rebecca would have returned to Ford Village the next morning, but the fatigue and nervous strain had been too much for her. She was not able to move from her bed. She had a species of low fever induced by anxiety and fatigue. But she could write, and she did, to the Slocums, and she received no answer. She also wrote to Mrs. Dent; she even sent numerous telegrams, with no response. Finally she wrote to the postmaster, and an answer arrived by the first possible mail. The letter was short, curt, and to the purpose. Mr. Amblecrom, the postmaster, was a man of few words, and especially wary as to his expressions in a letter.

"Dear madam," he wrote, "your favour rec'ed. No Slocums in Ford's Village. All dead. Addie ten years ago, her mother two years later, her father five. House vacant. Mrs. John Dent said to have neglected stepdaughter. Girl was sick. Medicine not given. Talk of taking action. Not enough evidence. House said to be haunted. Strange sights and sounds. Your niece, Agnes Dent, died a year ago, about this time.

"Yours truly,

"THOMAS AMBLECROM."

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UNDER THE DOME*

By Waldo Frank

They were two figures under the grey of the Dome--two straight faint figures of black; they were a man and woman with heads bowed, straight--under the surge of the Dome.

I

Friday night, when always he broke away in order to pray in the _Schul_, and when she sat in the shop and had to speak with the customers who came, these praying hours of Friday night. _Shabbas_ morning at least he did not go also.--My heart tells me it is wrong. Lord, forgive me for Esther and for my little girl. Lord, you know it is for them I do not go to _Schul_ on _Shabbas_ morning.--But by God, you will keep the store those two hours Friday! Do you hear? By God, what else have I ever asked

you for? Don't you sit around, do nothing all the day, and aren't Flora's clothes a filth? and hardly if you'll cook our meals. But this you will do: this you will do! Friday nights. Lord, why is there no light in Esther? What have I done, Lord? what have I not done?

She sat in a chair, always, near the side wall: her eyes lay burning against the cold glare of the gas.

Above her shoulder on the wall was a large sheet of fashions: women with wasp waists, smirking, rolling: stiff men, all clothes, with little heads. Under the table--where Meyer sits with his big feet so much to look at--Flora played, a soiled bundle, with a ball of yarn and a huge gleaming scizzors.--No one perhaps comes, and then I do not mind sitting and keeping the store. I saw a dead horse in the street.--A dead horse,

two days dead, rotting and stiff. Against the grey of the living street, a livid dead horse: a hot stink was his cold death against the street's clean-ness. There are two little boys, wrapped in blue coat, blue muffler, leather caps. They stand above the gaunt head of the horse and sneer at him. His flank rises red and huge. His legs are four strokes away from life. He is dead. The naughty boys pick up bricks. They stand, very close, above the head of the horse. They hurl down a brick. It strikes the horse's skull, falls sharp away. They hurl down a brick. It cuts the swollen nostril, falls soft away. The horse does not mind, the horse does not hurt. He is dead.

--Go away, you two! Throwing stones at a dead horse! Go away, I say!
How

would you like--When one is dead, stones strike one's skull and fall sharp away, one is moveless. When one is dead, stones strike the soft of one's throat and fall soft away, one is hurtless. When one is dead one does not hurt.

She sat and turned her eyes away from her child. Flora had smear on her face; her hands were grimed with the floor. One of her stockings was down: her little white knee was going to scrape on the floor, be black before it was bloody. So--A long shining table under a cold gas spurt. A store with clothes and a stove: no place for herself. A row of suits, all pressed and stiff with Meyer's diligence. A pile of suits, writhed with the wear of men, soiled, crumpled with traffic of streets, with bending of bodies in toil, in eating, in loving perhaps. Grimed living suits. Meyer takes an iron and it steams and it presses hard, it sucks up the grime. It sucks out the life from the suit. The suit is stiff and dead, now, ready to go once more over the body of a man and suck to itself his life.

The automatic bell clangs. There in the open door was a dark tall woman--customer.

Esther stood, too. She felt she was shorter and less tidy: more beautiful though.

Two women across the tailor-shop, seeing each other.

"I came for my husband's--for Mr. Breddan's dress suit. Mr. Lanich told him it would be ready at seven?"

Esther Lanich moved, Sophie Breddan stood. Between slow dark curve, swift dark stroke of these two women, under a tailor's table the burn of a dirty child, mumbling intent with scizzors between her soiled frail legs, at play with loose hair.

"Is this the one?"

The curve and the stroke came near across the table.

"Yes."

Eyes met.--She is tidy and fresh, less beautiful, though, than I. She has no child. She has a flat with Sun and a swell husband who wears a swallow-tail and takes her out to parties. She has a diamond ring, her corsets are sweet. She has things to put into her time like candies into her mouth, like loved kisses into my mouth. She is all new with her smooth skin going below the collar of her suit.

--She has a child, and she lets her play dirty with scizzors under a tailor table. "How much is it?"--After a decent bedtime.

--Does she think I care about this? "Oh, no hurry. Better come in and pay my--Mr. Lanich. Any time."

The clang of the bell.

Esther is seated. Her grey tilted eyes seem sudden to stand upon the farther wall of her husband's shop, and to look upon her. Her eyes speak soft warm words that touch her hair, touch her lips, lie like caressing fingers upon the soft cloth that lies upon her breast.

--Less beautiful than I, though. My flesh is soft and sweat, it is the colour of cream. What for? My hair is like an autumn tree gleaming with sun. I can let it fall through the high channel of my breast against my stomach that does not bulge but lies soft and low like a cushion of silk. What for? My eyes see beauty. What for? O there is no God. If there is God, what for?--He will come back and work. He will eat and work. He is kind and good. What for? When he is excited with love, doesn't he make an ugly noise with his nose? What else does he make with his love?--Another like Flora? God forbid. What for?

She did not pull down the wide yellow shade, though it was night. The street was a ribbon of velvet blackness laid beside the hurting and sharp brightness of the store. The yellow light was hard like grains of sand under the quick of her nails. She was afraid of the street. She was hurt in the store. But the brightness clamped her. She did not move.--O let no more customers come! "Keep quiet, Flora." I can not move.--She was clamped.

But the store moved, moved.

There was a black wheel with a gleaming axle--the Sun--that sent light dimming down its spokes as it spun. From the rim of the wheel where it was black, bright dust flung away as it spun. The store was a speck of bright dust. It flung straight. It moved along the velvet path of the street, touching, not merging with its night. It moved, it moved, she sat still in its moving. The store caught up with Meyer. He entered the store. He was there. He was there, scooped up from the path of the street by the store. Now her work was over. He was there. The store was

a still store, fixed in a dirty house. Its brightness the spurt of two jets of gas. He was back from _Schul_.--That is all.

A man with blond hair, flat feet that shuffled, small tender hands. A man with a mouth gentle, slow; with eyes timid to see. "Come dear: that is no place."--Why she lets the child play with my shears!

Tender hands pull Flora from beneath the table. Flora comes blinking, unprotesting. Where her father's hands leave off from her, she stays. She sinks back to the floor. She looks at her little fists from which the scissors are gone. She misses hard gleaming steel. She opens and shuts her fists and looks at them: she cries. But she does not move.--Her mother does not move.--Her father does not move. He squats on the table. His head sways with his thoughts. He knows that Flora will stop--what can he do?--in perhaps half an hour. It is a weak cry. Grows weaker. He is used to it. There is work.

He sews. 'A woman of valour who can find? For her price is far above rubies'--She will stay here, stay here silent. Flora should be in bed. Who to put his child in bed? Hard gas-light on her beloved hair? A wither, a wilt--'She is like the merchant ships; she bringeth her food from afar'--He sews and rips.--What, Lord, have I left undone? I love my Esther.--He sews.--I love my little girl. Lord, I fear the Lord--'She looketh well to the ways of the household, and eateth not the bread of idleness.'--Lighten me, Lord, give me light. There is my daughter crying, who should sleep: and my wife sitting, who will not, who will never without me go home. She is afraid. She says she is afraid. She is sullen and silent. She is so fair and sweet against my heart. Lord! why did her hands that held my head speak a lie? and her silent lips that she let press upon my mouth, why were they lies? Lord, I cannot understand. Lord, I pray. I must sew bread for Esther and for my child. I go to _Schul_ at least once each _Shabbas_, Lord--Do I not fill the deep ten Penitential Days from _Rosh Ha Shonoh_ to _Yom Ha Kippurim_

with seeking out of heart?--He sews, he rips. The weeping of his child is done. Long stitches, here. She has found a chair's leg to play with. Her moist fingers clasp at the shrill wood. The wooden chair and her soft flesh wrestle. Esther sits still. He sews.

'Her children arise, and call her blessed;
Her husband also, and he praiseth her;
--Many daughters have done valiantly,
But thou excellest them all.--
Grace is deceitful and beauty is vain;
But a woman that feareth the Lord, she shall be praised.
Give her of the fruit of her hands;
And let her works praise her in the gates.'

II

In the door and the clang again of the bell, a boy with them. A boy they knew--son of their neighbours--big for his years and heavy, with fat lips, eyes clouded, hair black and low over his clouded eyes. Esther alone saw, as he lurched in, one foot dragging always slightly.

He went for little Flora with no greeting for them: familiarly as he knew he would find her, had come so, often.--He loves her. The man who squats on the table and sews smiles on the boy who loves and plays with his child.

"Hello, kid," voice of a thick throat, "look--what I got for you here."

Flora lets the chair of her late love lurch against her back, strike her forward. She does not care. She watches two hands--grey-caked over red--unwrap from paper a dazzle of colours, place it to her eyes on the floor, pull with a string: it has little wheels, it moves!

"Quackle-duck," he announces.

Flora spreads out her hands, sinks on her rump, feels its green head that bobs with purple bill, feels its yellow tail.

"Quackle-duck--yours," says the boy.

She takes the string from his hand. With shoulder and stomach she swings her arm backward and pulls. The duck spurts, bobbing its green long head against her leg.

She plays. The boy on his knees with soiled thick drawers showing between his stockings and his pants plays with her.--

Meyer Lanich did not cease from work, nor his woman from silence. His face was warm in pleasure, watching his child who had a toy and a playmate.--I am all warm and full of love for Herbert Rabinowich: perhaps some day I can show him, or do something for his father. Now there was no way but to go on working, and smile so the pins in his mouth did not prick.

The eyes of Esther drew a line from these two children back to the birth of the one that was hers. She dwelt in a world about the bright small room like the night: in a world that roared and wailed, that reeled with despair of her hope.

She had borne this dirty child all clean beneath her heart. Her belly was sweet and white, it had borne her: her breasts were high and proud, they had emptied, they had come to sag for this dirty child on the floor--face and red lips on a floor that any shoes might step.

Had she not borne a Glory through the world, bearing this stir of perfect flesh? Had she not borne a song through the harsh city? Had she not borne another mite of pain, another fleck of dirt upon the city's

shame-heaps?

She lies in her bed burned in sweet pain. Pain wrings her body, wrings her soul like the word of the Lord within lips of Deborah. Her bed with white sheets, her bed with its pool of blood is an altar where she lays forth her Glory which she has walking carried like a song through the harsh city.--What have I mothered but dirt?--

A transfigured world she knows she will soon see. Yes: it is a flat of little light--and the bugs seep in from the other flats no matter how one cleans--it is a man of small grace, it is a world of few windows. But her child will be borne to smite life open wide. Her child shall leap above its father and its mother as the sun above forlorn fields.--She arose from her bed. She held her child in her arms. She walked through the reeling block with feet aflame. She entered the shop.--There--squatting with feet so wide to see--her man: his needle pressed by the selfsame finger. The world was not changed for her child. Behold her child changing--let her sit for ever upon her seat of tears--let her lay like fire to her breast this endless vision of her child changing unto the world.--

--I have no voice, I have no eyes. I am a woman who has
lain with the world.

The world's voice upon my lips gave my mouth gladness.

The world's arms about my flanks gave my flesh glory.

I was big with gladness and glory.

Joyful I lost in love of my vision my eyes, in love of my
song my voice.

I have borne another misery into the world.--

Meyer Lanich moves, putting away the trousers he has patched.--O Lord, why must I sew so many hours in order to reap my pain? Why must I work so long, heap the hard wither of so many hours upon my child who can not sleep till I do, in order that all of us may be unhappy?

* * * * *

The clang and the door open. The mother of the boy.

"Oh, here you are! Excuse me, friends. I was worrying over Herbert.--Well, how goes it?"

She smiled and stepped into the room: saw them all.

"All well, Mrs. Rabinowich," said Meyer. "We are so glad when your Herbert comes to play with Florchen."

Mrs. Rabinowich turns the love of her face upon the children who do not attend her. A grey long face, bitterly pock-marked, in a glow of love.

"Look what your Herbert brought her," Meyer sews and smiles. "A toy. He shouldn't, now. Such a thing costs money."

Mrs. Rabinowich puts an anxious finger to her lips.

"Don't," she whispers. "If he wants to, he should. It is lovely that he wants to. There's money enough for such lovely wants.--Well, darling. Won't you come home to bed?"

Herbert does not attend.

His mother sighed--a sigh of great appeasement and of content.--This is my son! She turned to where Esther sat with brooding eyes. Her face was serious now, grey ever, warm with a grey sorrow. Her lips moved: they knew not what to say.

"How are you, Esther?"

"Oh, I am well, Mrs. Rabinowich. Thank you." A voice resonant and deep, a voice mellowed by long keeping in the breast of a woman.

"Why don't you come round, some time, Esther? You know, I should always be so glad to see you."

"Thank you, Mrs. Rabinowich."

"You know--we're just next door," the older woman smiled. "You got time, I think. More time than I."

"Oh, she got time all right!" The sharp words flash from the soft mouth of Meyer, who sews and seems in no way one with the sharp words of his mouth. Esther does not look. She takes the words as if like stones they had fallen in her lap. She smiles away. She is still. And Lotte Rabinowich is still, looking at her with a deep wonder, shaking her head, unappeased in her search.

She turns at last to her boy: relieved.

"Come Herbert, now. Now we really got to go."

She takes his hand that he lets limply rise. She pulls him gently.

"Good night, dear ones.--Do come, some time, Esther--yes?"

"Thank you, Mrs. Rabinowich."

Meyer says: "Let the boy come when he wants. We love to have him."

His mother smiles.--Of course: who would not love to have him? Good heart, fine boy, dear child. "It's long past bedtime. Naughty!" She kisses him.

Herbert, a little like a horse, swings away his heavy head.

They are gone in the bell's jangle.

* * * * *

"What a good boy: what a big-hearted boy!" Meyer said aloud. "I like the boy. He will be strong and a success, you see."

Her words, "I saw him lift the skirt of Flora and peep up," she could not utter. She was silent, seeing the dull boy with the dirty mind, and his mother and Meyer through love thinking him good. What she saw in her silence hurt her.

Her hurt flowed out in fear. She saw her child: a great fear came on Esther.--Flora is small and white, the world is full of men with thick lips, hairy hands, of men who will lift her skirt and kiss her, of men who will press their hairiness against her whiteness.

--There is a Magic, Love, whereby this shame is sweet. Where is it? A world of men with hair and lips against her whiteness. Where is the magic against them? Esther was very afraid. She hated her daughter.

III

Meyer Lanich came down from his table and drew down the wide yellow shade and shut out the night. No more stray customers to enter. He turned the key of the door. He had his back to the door, seeing his work and his child who now sat vacant upon the floor and grimed her eyes with her fists too sleepy to hunt play--seeing his wife. He sought to see this woman who was his wife. To this end came his words, old words, old words he had tried often, often failed with, words that would come again

since they were the words of his seeking to find the woman his wife.

"Esther," he said, "it is nine o'clock and I have much work to do--a couple of hours of work.--"--I could work faster alone, it will be midnight so with this pain for ever in my eyes. "Esther won't you go home and put Florchen to bed?"

She looked at him with her full lovely eyes. Why since he saw them lovely could he not see them loving? He had said these words before, so often before. She looked at him.

"Esther," he said, "it is bad for a baby of four to be up so late. It is bad for her to sit around on the floor under the gas--smelling the gas and the gasoline and the steam of the clothes. Can't you consider Flora?"

"I am afraid."

"What is there to be afraid of? Can't you see? Why aren't you afraid of what will happen to Flora? Eh--that don't frighten you, does it? She's a baby. If my Mother could see--"

"Meyer, I can't. Meyer, I can't. You know that I can't."

He waved his hands. She was stiff. They came no nearer one to the other. About them each, two poles, swirled thoughts and feeling--a world that did not touch the other.

He clambered back to his work. The room was hot. The gaslight burned. Against his temples it beat harsh air, harsh light, the acrid smells of his work--against her temples.

Esther sat. The words of her man seeking the woman she was had not found

for him but had stirred her. Her breast moved fast, but all else of her was stiff. Stiff, all she moved like a thick river drawn against its flow, drawn mounting to its head.--I cannot go home alone, to the empty hall alone, into the black rooms alone. Against their black the flicker of a match that may go out, the dare of a gas-light that is all white and shrieking with its fear of the black world it is in. She could not go home alone.--For, Esther, in your loneliness you will find your life. I am afraid of my life.

She was caught, she was trapped.--I am miserable. Let me only not move.--Since to move was to break against walls of a trap. Here in the heart of movelessness a little space. Let her not stir where the walls and the roof of the black small trap will smite her!

IV

The room moves up the dimension of time. Hour and hour and hour.
Bearing
its freight toward sleep. Thick hot room, torn by the burr of two
lights, choked by the strain of two bound souls, moving along the night.
Writhing in dream. Singing.--

--My flesh sings for silk and rich jewels;
My flesh cries for the mouth of a king.
My hair, why is it not a canopy of love,
Why does it not cover sweet secrets of love?
My hair cries to be laid upon white linen.
I have brought misery into the world.--
I have lived with a small man and my dreams have shrunk him,
Who in my dreams enlarged the glory of princes.
He looks upon me with soft eyes, and my flesh is hard against them.
He beats upon me with warm heart, and my breasts do not rise up for
him.

They are soft and forgetful of his beating heart.

My breasts dream far when he is near to them--

They droop, they die.

His hands are a tearful prayer upon my body--

I sit: there is no way between my man and my dream,

There is no way between my life and life,

There is no way between my love and my child.

I lie: and my eyes are shut. I sleep: and they open.

A world of mountains

Plunges against my sleep.--

--Lord, Lord: this is my daughter before me, her cheeks that have not bloomed are wilting. Preserve her, Lord. This is my wife before me, her love that has not lived is dead.--Time is a barren field that has no end. I see no horizon. My feet walk endlessly, I see no horizon.--I am faithful, Lord.--

* * * * *

The tailor-shop is black. It has moved up three hours into midnight. It is black.

Esther and Meyer walk the grey street. In the arms of the man sleeps Flora. His arm aches. He dares not change her to his other arm. Lest she wake.

He has undressed her. Gentle hands of a man. He holds her little body, naked, near his eyes. Her face and her hands, her feet and her knees are soiled. The rest of her body is white--very white--no bloom upon her body. He kisses her black hair.

He lays her away beneath her coverlet.

There is his wife before him. She is straight. Her naked body rises,

column of white flame, from her dun skirt. Esther--his love--she is in a case of fire. Within her breasts as within hard jewels move the liquids of love. Within her body, as within a case, lies her soul, pent, which should pour forth its warmth upon them.

He embraces her.

"Esther.--Esther--" He can say no more.

His lips are at her throat. Can he not break her open?

She sways back, yielding. Her eyes swerve up. They catch the cradle of her child.

--Another child--another agony of glory--another misery to the world?

She is stiff in the unbroken case of a vast wound all about her.

So they lie down in bed. So they sleep.

* * * * *

She has cooked their breakfast.

They walk, a man and a woman, down the steep street to work. A child between them, holding the hand of a man.

They are grey, they are sullen. They are caught up in the sullen strife of their relentless life. There is no let to them. Time is a barren field with no horizon.

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SPOOKS OF THE HIAWASSEE+

by Charles Skinner

The hills about the head of the Hiawassee are filled with "harnts," among them many animal ghosts, that ravage about the country from sheer viciousness. The people of the region, illiterate and superstitious, have unquestioning faith in them. They tell you about the headless bull and black dog of the valley of the Chatata, the white stag of the Sequahatchie, and the bleeding horse of the Great Smoky Mountains—the last three being portents of illness, death, or misfortune to those who see them.

Other ghosts are those of men. Near the upper Hiawassee is a cave where a pile of human skulls was found by a man who had put up his cabin near the entrance. For some reason, which he says he never understood, this farmer gathered up the old, bleached bones and dumped them into his shed. Quite possibly he did not dare to confess that he wanted them for fertilizers or to burn them for his poultry.

Night fell dark and still, with a waning moon rising over the mountains—as calm a night as ever one slept through. Along toward the middle of it a sound like the coming of a cyclone brought the farmer out of his bed. He ran to the window to see if the house were to be uprooted, but the forest was still, with a strange, oppressive stillness—not a twig moving, not a cloud veiling the stars, not an insect chirping. Filled with a vague fear, he tried to waken his wife, but she was like one in a state of catalepsy.

Again the sound was heard, and now he saw, without, a shadowy band circling about his house like leaves whirled on the wind. It seemed to be made of human shapes, with tossing arms—this circling band—and the sound was that of many voices, each faint and hollow, by itself, but loud in aggregate. He who was watching realized then that the wraiths of the dead whose skulls he had purloined from their place of sepulture were out in lament and protest. He went on his knees at once and prayed with vigor until morning. As soon as it was light enough to see his way he replaced

the skulls, and was not troubled by the "haunts" again. All the gold in America, said he, would not tempt him to remove any more bones from the cave-tombs of the unknown dead.

A SMALL BEGINNING*

by Susan Coolidge

A LITTLE ground-floor room, a little fire in a small stove, burning dully as fires are apt to do at times when their blaze might be worth something in the way of cheer; out doors the raw gray of a spring thaw; on the window-seat two girls crouched together and looking out with faces as disconsolate as the weather. Such was the picture presented at No. 13 Farewell Street, three years ago last March.

Farewell Street was so named because of its being the customary route of exit from the old cemetery, the point where mourners were supposed to turn for a last look at the gates which had just shut in the newly buried friend; and this association, as well as the glimpse of tall cemetery fence, topped with mournful evergreens which bounded the view, did not tend to make the sad outlook any the less sad on that dismal day. For it was only a fortnight since Delia and Hetty Willett, the girls on the window-seat, had left within those gates the kind old grandmother who for years had stood to them in the stead of father and mother both.

"The Willetts," as the neighbors called them, using the collective phrase always, were twins, and just eighteen years old. Bearing to each other even a stronger personal likeness than twins customarily possess, they were in other points curiously unlike. Delia was soft and clinging, Hetty vigorous and self-reliant. Delia loved to be guided, Hetty to guide; the former had few independent views and opinions, the latter was brimful of ideas and fancies, plans and purposes; some crude, some foolish, but all her own. Yet, oddly enough, it was Delia, very often, who gave the casting vote in their decisions, for Hetty's love for her slender twin was a sentiment so deep and intense that she often yielded against her own better sense and judgment, simply for the pleasure of yielding to what Delia wished. Delia in return adored her sister, waited on her, petted, consoled, "exactly as if she were Hetty's wife," Aunt

Polly said, "and the worst was they suited each other so well that no one else would ever suit either of them, and they were bound to die old maids in consequence!"

But eighteen can laugh at such auguries, and there was no thought or question of marriage in the minds of the sisters as they crouched that afternoon close together on the old window-seat.

A very different question absorbed them, and a perplexing one; how they were to live, namely, and to keep together while doing so, which meant pretty much the same thing to them both. Grandmother's death had left them with so very, very little. Her annuity died with her. There was the old house, the plain, worn furniture to which they had been accustomed all their lives, and about a hundred dollars a year! What could they do with that?

"If one of us only happened to be clever," sighed Delia. "If I could paint pictures, or you had a talent for writing, how easy it would be!"

"I don't know as to that," responded Hetty. "Seems to me I've heard of people who did those things, and yet didn't find it so mighty easy to get along. Somebody's got to buy the pictures after they're painted, you know, and read the books, and pay for them." She spoke in an absent tone, and her brow was knitted into the little frown which Delia knew betokened that her twin was puzzling hard over something.

"Don't scowl, it'll spoil your forehead," she said, smoothing out the objectionable frown with her fingers.

"Was I scowling? Well, never mind. I'm trying to think, Dely. You can't paint and I can't write. The question is, What can we do?"

"That is a question," said a voice at the door. It was Aunt Polly's voice. She managed on most days to drop in and "give a look to them, the

lonely little creeturs," as she would have expressed it.

"You're consultin', I see," she said, taking in the situation at a glance: the dismal room, the depressive and tearful cheeks of the two girls, the lack of comfort and cheer. She twitched open the stove door as she passed, threw in a stick of wood, twirled the damper, and gave a brisk, rattling shake to the ashes,--all with a turn of her hand as it were,--attentions to which the stove presently responded with a brisk roar. "Well, it's time you did. I was planning to have a talk with you before long, for you ought to settle to something. Pull the blind down, Dely, and, Hetty, you light the lamp, and come to the fire, both of you, and let's see what we can make of it. It's a tangled skein enough, I don't deny it; but most skeins are that, and there's always a right end somewhere, if the Lord'll give us sense enough to get hold of it and keep on pulling out and winding up."

Presently the girls were seated close to Aunt Polly's rocking-chair. The room looked more cheerful now with the lamplight and the yellow glow from the stove, and both were conscious of a sense of hopefulness.

"Now--what can you do?" demanded Aunt Polly, whirling round in her chair so as to face them.

"We hadn't got so far as that when you came in," replied Hetty; "I suppose we must do what other people do in the same circumstances."

"What's that?"

"Teach something, or sew, I suppose."

"Sewing's slow starvation, in my opinion, unless you've got a machine, which you haven't, and not much better then. What do you know that you can teach?"

"Not much," replied Hetty, humbly, while Delia added hesitatingly, "We could teach children their letters, perhaps."

"I presume you could," responded Aunt Polly, dryly. "But, though you mayn't know it, perhaps, there are about fifty women in this town can do the same, and who mean to do it, what's more. And most of 'em have got the start of you in one way or another, so what's your chance worth? No, girls, sewing and teaching are played out. They are good things in their way, but every woman who's got her living to earn thinks of them the very first thing and of nothing else, and the market is always overstocked. My advice to you is, to _think up something you can do better than other people_--that's what gives folks a real chance! Now, what is there?"

"There isn't anything I can do better than other people," cried the dismayed Delia. "Nor Hetty either--except make gingerbread," she added, with a faint little laugh. "Hetty beats everybody at that, grandmother always said."

"Very well; make gingerbread then. That's your thing to do," said Aunt Polly.

Hetty looked at her with incredulous eyes.

"You're not in earnest, are you?" she said.

"I am. In dead earnest."

"But, Aunt Polly, _gingerbread_! Such a little thing as that! Who ever heard of a girl's doing such a thing?"

"All the better if they never did. A new trade has a double chance. As for the 'little,' great things often come from small beginnings. Fortunes have been made out of gingerbread before now, I'll be bound, or

if not that, out of something no bigger. No, Hetty, depend upon it, if your gingerbread is best, folks will want it. And if your teaching or sewing is only second best, they won't. It's the law of human nature, and a very good law, too, though it cuts the wrong way sometimes, like all laws."

"Aunt Polly, you're a genius!" cried Hetty, warmed into sudden glow by this vigorous common sense. "I can make good gingerbread, and it's just as you say, neither of us know enough to teach well, and we are both poor hands at sewing, and we should have a much better chance if we

tried to do what we can and not what we can't. Why shouldn't I make gingerbread? Dely'd help me, and if folks liked our things and bought them, we could live and keep together. We could make a kind of shop of this room, couldn't we? What do you think?"

"'Tisn't a bad place for such a trade," said Aunt Polly, slowly, measuring the room with her eyes. "Being on a corner is an advantage, you see; and there's that double winder on the street gives a first-rate chance to show what you've got to sell. I never did see no use in that winder before. My father, he had it cut for a kind of a whim like, and we all thought it was notional in him; but, as they say, keep a thing long enough and a use'll turn up. It's a sort of a gain for you, too, having the house so old-fashioned. Folks has a hankering for such things, nowadays--the Lord knows why. I hear 'em going on about it when I'm out tailorin', calling ugly things 'quaint,' and lovely, because they're old. Hetty,"--with sudden inspiration,--"here's an idea for you, be 'quaint'! Don't try for a shop, keep the room a room, and make it as old-fashioned-looking as you can, and I'll bet a cookie that your gingerbread'll be twice as popular with one set of folks, and if it's first-rate gingerbread, the other set who don't care for old things will like it just as well."

What a bracing thing is a word in season! Aunt Polly's little seed of

suggestion grew and spread like Jack's fabled bean-stalk.

"Your light biscuits always turn out well," said Delia.

"And my snaps. Grandmother liked them so much. And you're a good hand at loaf bread, you know. Aunt Polly--I seem to smell a fortune in the air. We will begin at once, just as soon as I can get a half-barrel of flour and put an advertisement in the paper."

Hetty had a ready wit, and Aunt Polly's hint as to "quaintness" was not lost upon her. The advertisement when it appeared the next day but one ran thus:--

"After Monday next, the Old-Time Bakery, corner of Farewell and Martin Streets, will be prepared to furnish, to order, fresh bread, buns, biscuits, and grandmother's gingerbread, all home-made."

People smiled over the little notice, but the odd wording stuck in their memories as odd things will, and more than one person went out of his way during the next week to take a look into the wide, low window, within which, on a broad, napkin-covered shelf, stood rows of biscuits, light and white, buns, each glazed with shining umber-brown, and loaves of gingerbread whose complexion and smell were enough to vouch for their excellence. Acting on Aunt Polly's suggestion, Hetty had set forth her wares on plates of the oldest and oddest pattern which could be found in grandmother's closet. A queer, tall pitcher flanked them on either side, and round the window-frame she had twined the long, luxuriant shoots of a potted ivy. Altogether the effect was pretty, and no one need be told that the pitchers had for years been consecrated to the reception of yeast and corks, or that the plates had long since been relegated to kitchen use as too shabby for better occasions.

"Hain't ye no white chany?" inquired their first customer, an old woman,

as she slowly counted out the pennies for half a dozen biscuit. "It would kind of set your cakes off."

"We used what we had," replied Hetty, diplomatically. "But I hope your biscuits'll taste just as good as if they came off a white plate."

This old woman, two others, and a little boy were the only customers that first day.

"Tisn't a bit a good beginning," declared Delia, pouring the money received out of an old-fashioned china tea-caddy which Hetty had unearthed in an up-stairs closet and brought down to serve as a till. "Two dozen biscuits, that's twenty-four cents, a loaf of gingerbread, and about half the buns. That's fifty-three cents in all. What did you say the materials cost?"

"About seventy cents. But then we have our supper and breakfast out of them, and nearly half the stock to sell at a reduced rate to-morrow. We shan't lose anything, I reckon, but we shan't gain much either."

"Rome wasn't built all in a minute. You'll do yet," remarked Aunt Polly, who had dropped in to hear the result of the first day's sales.

But two days--three--a week, went by, and still trade did not materially improve, and it took all Aunt Polly's wise saws and hopeful auguries to keep their spirits up. Each day showed the same record, no loss, but almost no gain. Toward the end of the second week matters mended. Mrs. Corliss, the wife of a wealthy manufacturer, having an errand in Farewell Street, happened to pass the little window, and her bric-a-brac-loving eyes were caught at once by its unusual appearance. She stopped, studied the whole arrangement from the ivy wreath to the old pitchers; a recollection of the droll little advertisement over which she had laughed a few days previously, came over her. "I declare, this is the very place," she said to herself; and opening the door she

entered, precisely as Hetty came from the kitchen through the opposite door, a handkerchief tied over her shiny hair, a white apron with a little ruffled waist protecting her print gown, her cheeks flushed rosy pink with heat, and in her hands a tray full of crisp, delectably smelling ginger-snaps.

"A real study--like a Flemish picture," Mrs. Corliss said afterward. She fell in love at once with the quaint room, the pretty sisters, the old china, stayed twenty minutes nibbling ginger-snaps and looking about her, bought a dollar's worth of everything, "on trial," as she said, and swept out, leaving a wake of rose-colored hope in the air--and Delia and Hetty executing a wild waltz behind her back, for joy and gratulation.

"Luck has turned--I know, I feel it," declared Hetty.

Luck had turned. Mrs. Corliss raved to everybody she knew about the room, the twin-sisters, and the excellence of the gingerbread. It became a fashion to go to Farewell Street for buns and biscuits. Hetty and Delia had to work early and late to fill their orders, but what was that "to sewing their fingers off for a bare living"? Hetty said; and toil was sweetened now by a gradually increasing profit. At the end of the first six months they had not only "lived and kept together," but had a little sum laid by, which, as Aunt Polly advised, was treated as "business capital," part of it being invested in the purchase of an awning for the window and an extra stove to increase their baking capacity. Very rarely were there any stale things left now to be sold next day at half-price, the regular orders and chance custom consuming all.

"We shall have to hire a boy to carry things round, I actually believe," declared Hetty. "Mrs. Malcomb and Mrs. Sayres both said that they would order our bread regularly if we could send it home."

"I've been expecting that would be the next step," remarked Aunt Polly,

"and I guess I've got just the boy you want, in my eye. It's Widow McCullen's lad--Sandy, as they call him. He's a good little chap, and it'll be a real help to his mother to have him earning a trifle."

So Sandy McCullen was regularly engaged as "bread-boy," and business grew brisker still.

"Aunt Polly, we've got to another notch," said Hetty, at the end of the first year. "You don't happen to know of a girl, do you, who could help us in the baking? Delia and I can't keep up with the orders. She gets so tired every now and then that she can't sleep, and that worries me so that I lie awake, too."

"That'll never answer; no, I don't know of any girl, but there's a nice kind of an oldish woman, if she'll do, that I'd like to recommend. Yes--I mean myself," she went on, chuckling at Hetty's amazed look. "It's come to me more than once lately that it'd be sort of good and restful to make a change, and not go on tailorin' forever, all the rest of my days. I used to be a master hand at bread and pie-crust, too, when I was your age, and I've a little saved up which can go with the business if it's needed; and, if you girls say so, we'll just make a kind of family firm of the thing. How does it strike you?"

"Oh, Aunt Polly, the very thing, only it seems too good to be true. Do you really mean it? We did so hate the idea of a raw girl to whom we should have to teach everything, and who would spoil half she made for the first month, and I've fought it off as long as I could. Why, it will be like having grandmother come back, to have you living with us. There's the west room all ready. Dear me! How delightfully things seem to turn out for us always!"

"That wasn't your view always, it seems to me," rejoined Aunt Polly. "A year ago you was pretty down in the mouth, if I don't mistake. Gingerbread is good for something, you see."

"The Old-Time Bakery" still goes on in Farewell Street, but it has grown far beyond its original proportions. If you were to visit it to-day you would find a room double the size of the former, and which has been made by taking down a partition wall between the sitting-room and a spare bedroom and throwing them into one. There are two windows on the street now, one full of bread, biscuits, and buns, the other stored with Hetty's now famous gingerbread, and with delicious-looking pumpkin-pies and apple-tarts with old-fashioned flaky crust, which are Aunt Polly's specialty and have added greatly to the reputation of the establishment. Still it is not a shop. Hetty, with wary good taste, has scrupulously preserved the "quaint" look which first gave character to the little enterprise, and by judicious rummaging in neighbors' garrets has acquired sundry old-time chairs, bottles, jugs, and platters, which help in the effect. Everything is scrupulously clean and bright, as all things must be where Aunt Polly supervises; but the brightest things in the room are the faces of the twin sisters. They have tested and proved their powers; they know now what they can do, and they taste the happiness of success.

I tell their little story, in which is nothing remarkable or out of the way, for the sake of other girls, who, perhaps, are sitting to-day with folded hands and puzzling and wondering, just as Hetty and Delia did, over what they are to do and how to set about it. I do not mean at all that these girls should all make gingerbread--that indeed would be "overstocking the market," as Aunt Polly would say, but only that they should hearken to her word of wisdom, "find out what they can do _best_, and do that," whatever it is, secure that good work, and hearty striving will win some measure of success soon or late, even if its beginnings are small and insignificant as a gingerbread loaf or a batch of biscuit!

from The Project Gutenberg EBook #35186
of *A Round Dozen*, by Susan Coolidge

THE CATSKILL WITCH+

by Charles Skinner

When the Dutch gave the name of Katzbergs to the mountains west of the Hudson, by reason of the wild-cats and panthers that ranged there, they obliterated the beautiful Indian Ontiora, "mountains of the sky." In one tradition of the red men these hills were bones of a monster that fed on human beings until the Great Spirit turned it into stone as it was floundering toward the ocean to bathe. The two lakes near the summit were its eyes. These peaks were the home of an Indian witch, who adjusted the weather for the Hudson Valley with the certainty of a signal service bureau. It was she who let out the day and night in blessed alternation, holding back the one when the other was at large, for fear of conflict. Old moons she cut into stars as soon as she had hung new ones in the sky, and she was often seen perched on Round Top and North Mountain, spinning clouds and flinging them to the winds. Woe betide the valley residents if they showed irreverence, for then the clouds were black and heavy, and through them she poured floods of rain and launched the lightnings, causing disastrous freshets in the streams and blasting the wigwams of the mockers. In a frolic humor she would take the form of a bear or deer and lead the Indian hunters anything but a merry dance, exposing them to tire and peril, and vanishing or assuming some terrible shape when they had overtaken her. Sometimes she would lead them to the cloves and would leap into the air with a mocking "Ho, ho!" just as they stopped with a shudder at the brink of an abyss. Garden Rock was a spot where she was often found, and at its foot a lake once spread. This was held in such awe that an Indian would never wittingly pursue his quarry there; but once a hunter lost his way and emerged from the forest at the edge of the pond. Seeing a number of gourds in crotches of the trees he took one, but fearing the spirit he turned to leave so quickly that he stumbled and it fell. As it broke, a spring welled from it in such volume that the unhappy man was gulfed in its waters, swept to the edge of Kaaterskill clove and dashed on the rocks two hundred and sixty feet below. Nor did the water ever cease to run, and in these times the stream born of the

witch's revenge is known as Catskill Creek.

THE ADVENTURE OF THE NOBLE BACHELOR*

by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle

The Lord St. Simon marriage, and its curious termination, have long ceased to be a subject of interest in those exalted circles in which the unfortunate bridegroom moves. Fresh scandals have eclipsed it, and their more piquant details have drawn the gossips away from this four-year-old drama. As I have reason to believe, however, that the full facts have never been revealed to the general public, and as my friend Sherlock Holmes had a considerable share in clearing the matter up, I feel that no memoir of him would be complete without some little sketch of this remarkable episode.

It was a few weeks before my own marriage, during the days when I was still sharing rooms with Holmes in Baker Street, that he came home from an afternoon stroll to find a letter on the table waiting for him. I had remained indoors all day, for the weather had taken a sudden turn to rain, with high autumnal winds, and the Jezail bullet which I had brought back in one of my limbs as a relic of my Afghan campaign throbbed with dull persistence. With my body in one easy-chair and my legs upon another, I had surrounded myself with a cloud of newspapers until at last, saturated with the news of the day, I tossed them all aside and lay listless, watching the huge crest and monogram upon the envelope upon the table and wondering lazily who my friend's noble correspondent could be.

"Here is a very fashionable epistle," I remarked as he entered. "Your morning letters, if I remember right, were from a fish-monger and a tide-waiter."

"Yes, my correspondence has certainly the charm of variety," he answered, smiling, "and the humbler are usually the more

interesting. This looks like one of those unwelcome social summonses which call upon a man either to be bored or to lie."

He broke the seal and glanced over the contents.

"Oh, come, it may prove to be something of interest, after all."

"Not social, then?"

"No, distinctly professional."

"And from a noble client?"

"One of the highest in England."

"My dear fellow, I congratulate you."

"I assure you, Watson, without affectation, that the status of my client is a matter of less moment to me than the interest of his case. It is just possible, however, that that also may not be wanting in this new investigation. You have been reading the papers diligently of late, have you not?"

"It looks like it," said I ruefully, pointing to a huge bundle in the corner. "I have had nothing else to do."

"It is fortunate, for you will perhaps be able to post me up. I read nothing except the criminal news and the agony column. The latter is always instructive. But if you have followed recent events so closely you must have read about Lord St. Simon and his wedding?"

"Oh, yes, with the deepest interest."

"That is well. The letter which I hold in my hand is from Lord St. Simon. I will read it to you, and in return you must turn over these papers and let me have whatever bears upon the matter. This is what he says:

"MY DEAR MR. SHERLOCK HOLMES:--Lord Backwater tells me that I may place implicit reliance upon your judgment and discretion. I have determined, therefore, to call upon you and to consult you in reference to the very painful event which has occurred in connection with my wedding. Mr. Lestrade, of Scotland Yard, is acting already in the matter, but he assures me that he sees no objection to your co-operation, and that he even thinks that it might be of some assistance. I will call at four o'clock in the afternoon, and, should you have any other engagement at that time, I hope that you will postpone it, as this matter is of paramount importance. Yours faithfully, ST. SIMON.'

"It is dated from Grosvenor Mansions, written with a quill pen, and the noble lord has had the misfortune to get a smear of ink upon the outer side of his right little finger," remarked Holmes as he folded up the epistle.

"He says four o'clock. It is three now. He will be here in an hour."

"Then I have just time, with your assistance, to get clear upon the subject. Turn over those papers and arrange the extracts in their order of time, while I take a glance as to who our client is." He picked a red-covered volume from a line of books of reference beside the mantelpiece. "Here he is," said he, sitting down and flattening it out upon his knee. "'Lord Robert Walsingham de Vere St. Simon, second son of the Duke of Balmoral.' Hum! 'Arms: Azure, three caltrops in chief over a fess sable. Born in 1846.' He's forty-one years of age, which is mature for marriage. Was

Under-Secretary for the colonies in a late administration. The Duke, his father, was at one time Secretary for Foreign Affairs. They inherit Plantagenet blood by direct descent, and Tudor on the distaff side. Ha! Well, there is nothing very instructive in all this. I think that I must turn to you Watson, for something more solid."

"I have very little difficulty in finding what I want," said I, "for the facts are quite recent, and the matter struck me as remarkable. I feared to refer them to you, however, as I knew that you had an inquiry on hand and that you disliked the intrusion of other matters."

"Oh, you mean the little problem of the Grosvenor Square furniture van. That is quite cleared up now--though, indeed, it was obvious from the first. Pray give me the results of your newspaper selections."

"Here is the first notice which I can find. It is in the personal column of the Morning Post, and dates, as you see, some weeks back: 'A marriage has been arranged,' it says, 'and will, if rumour is correct, very shortly take place, between Lord Robert St. Simon, second son of the Duke of Balmoral, and Miss Hatty Doran, the only daughter of Aloysius Doran. Esq., of San Francisco, Cal., U.S.A.' That is all."

"Terse and to the point," remarked Holmes, stretching his long, thin legs towards the fire.

"There was a paragraph amplifying this in one of the society papers of the same week. Ah, here it is: 'There will soon be a call for protection in the marriage market, for the present free-trade principle appears to tell heavily against our home product. One by one the management of the noble houses of Great

Britain is passing into the hands of our fair cousins from across the Atlantic. An important addition has been made during the last week to the list of the prizes which have been borne away by these charming invaders. Lord St. Simon, who has shown himself for over twenty years proof against the little god's arrows, has now definitely announced his approaching marriage with Miss Hatty Doran, the fascinating daughter of a California millionaire. Miss Doran, whose graceful figure and striking face attracted much attention at the Westbury House festivities, is an only child, and it is currently reported that her dowry will run to considerably over the six figures, with expectancies for the future. As it is an open secret that the Duke of Balmoral has been compelled to sell his pictures within the last few years, and as Lord St. Simon has no property of his own save the small estate of Birchmoor, it is obvious that the Californian heiress is not the only gainer by an alliance which will enable her to make the easy and common transition from a Republican lady to a British peeress."

"Anything else?" asked Holmes, yawning.

"Oh, yes; plenty. Then there is another note in the Morning Post to say that the marriage would be an absolutely quiet one, that it would be at St. George's, Hanover Square, that only half a dozen intimate friends would be invited, and that the party would return to the furnished house at Lancaster Gate which has been taken by Mr. Aloysius Doran. Two days later--that is, on Wednesday last--there is a curt announcement that the wedding had taken place, and that the honeymoon would be passed at Lord Backwater's place, near Petersfield. Those are all the notices which appeared before the disappearance of the bride."

"Before the what?" asked Holmes with a start.

"The vanishing of the lady."

"When did she vanish, then?"

"At the wedding breakfast."

"Indeed. This is more interesting than it promised to be; quite dramatic, in fact."

"Yes; it struck me as being a little out of the common."

"They often vanish before the ceremony, and occasionally during the honeymoon; but I cannot call to mind anything quite so prompt as this. Pray let me have the details."

"I warn you that they are very incomplete."

"Perhaps we may make them less so."

"Such as they are, they are set forth in a single article of a morning paper of yesterday, which I will read to you. It is headed, 'Singular Occurrence at a Fashionable Wedding':

"The family of Lord Robert St. Simon has been thrown into the greatest consternation by the strange and painful episodes which have taken place in connection with his wedding. The ceremony, as shortly announced in the papers of yesterday, occurred on the previous morning; but it is only now that it has been possible to confirm the strange rumours which have been so persistently floating about. In spite of the attempts of the friends to hush the matter up, so much public attention has now been drawn to it that no good purpose can be served by affecting to disregard what is a common subject for conversation.

"The ceremony, which was performed at St. George's, Hanover Square, was a very quiet one, no one being present save the father of the bride, Mr. Aloysius Doran, the Duchess of Balmoral, Lord Backwater, Lord Eustace and Lady Clara St. Simon (the younger brother and sister of the bridegroom), and Lady Alicia Whittington. The whole party proceeded afterwards to the house of Mr. Aloysius Doran, at Lancaster Gate, where breakfast had been prepared. It appears that some little trouble was caused by a woman, whose name has not been ascertained, who endeavoured to force her way into the house after the bridal party, alleging that she had some claim upon Lord St. Simon. It was only after a painful and prolonged scene that she was ejected by the butler and the footman. The bride, who had fortunately entered the house before this unpleasant interruption, had sat down to breakfast with the rest, when she complained of a sudden indisposition and retired to her room. Her prolonged absence having caused some comment, her father followed her, but learned from her maid that she had only come up to her chamber for an instant, caught up an ulster and bonnet, and hurried down to the passage. One of the footmen declared that he had seen a lady leave the house thus apparelled, but had refused to credit that it was his mistress, believing her to be with the company. On ascertaining that his daughter had disappeared, Mr. Aloysius Doran, in conjunction with the bridegroom, instantly put themselves in communication with the police, and very energetic inquiries are being made, which will probably result in a speedy clearing up of this very singular business. Up to a late hour last night, however, nothing had transpired as to the whereabouts of the missing lady. There are rumours of foul play in the matter, and it is said that the police have caused the arrest of the woman who had caused the original disturbance, in the belief that, from jealousy or some other motive, she may have been concerned in the strange disappearance of the bride."

"And is that all?"

"Only one little item in another of the morning papers, but it is a suggestive one."

"And it is--"

"That Miss Flora Millar, the lady who had caused the disturbance, has actually been arrested. It appears that she was formerly a danseuse at the Allegro, and that she has known the bridegroom for some years. There are no further particulars, and the whole case is in your hands now--so far as it has been set forth in the public press."

"And an exceedingly interesting case it appears to be. I would not have missed it for worlds. But there is a ring at the bell, Watson, and as the clock makes it a few minutes after four, I have no doubt that this will prove to be our noble client. Do not dream of going, Watson, for I very much prefer having a witness, if only as a check to my own memory."

"Lord Robert St. Simon," announced our page-boy, throwing open the door. A gentleman entered, with a pleasant, cultured face, high-nosed and pale, with something perhaps of petulance about the mouth, and with the steady, well-opened eye of a man whose pleasant lot it had ever been to command and to be obeyed. His manner was brisk, and yet his general appearance gave an undue impression of age, for he had a slight forward stoop and a little bend of the knees as he walked. His hair, too, as he swept off his very curly-brimmed hat, was grizzled round the edges and thin upon the top. As to his dress, it was careful to the verge of foppishness, with high collar, black frock-coat, white waistcoat, yellow gloves, patent-leather shoes, and light-coloured gaiters. He advanced slowly into the room, turning his head from left to

right, and swinging in his right hand the cord which held his golden eyeglasses.

"Good-day, Lord St. Simon," said Holmes, rising and bowing. "Pray take the basket-chair. This is my friend and colleague, Dr. Watson. Draw up a little to the fire, and we will talk this matter over."

"A most painful matter to me, as you can most readily imagine, Mr. Holmes. I have been cut to the quick. I understand that you have already managed several delicate cases of this sort, sir, though I presume that they were hardly from the same class of society."

"No, I am descending."

"I beg pardon."

"My last client of the sort was a king."

"Oh, really! I had no idea. And which king?"

"The King of Scandinavia."

"What! Had he lost his wife?"

"You can understand," said Holmes suavely, "that I extend to the affairs of my other clients the same secrecy which I promise to you in yours."

"Of course! Very right! very right! I'm sure I beg pardon. As to my own case, I am ready to give you any information which may assist you in forming an opinion."

"Thank you. I have already learned all that is in the public prints, nothing more. I presume that I may take it as correct--this article, for example, as to the disappearance of the bride."

Lord St. Simon glanced over it. "Yes, it is correct, as far as it goes."

"But it needs a great deal of supplementing before anyone could offer an opinion. I think that I may arrive at my facts most directly by questioning you."

"Pray do so."

"When did you first meet Miss Hatty Doran?"

"In San Francisco, a year ago."

"You were travelling in the States?"

"Yes."

"Did you become engaged then?"

"No."

"But you were on a friendly footing?"

"I was amused by her society, and she could see that I was amused."

"Her father is very rich?"

"He is said to be the richest man on the Pacific slope."

"And how did he make his money?"

"In mining. He had nothing a few years ago. Then he struck gold, invested it, and came up by leaps and bounds."

"Now, what is your own impression as to the young lady's--your wife's character?"

The nobleman swung his glasses a little faster and stared down into the fire. "You see, Mr. Holmes," said he, "my wife was twenty before her father became a rich man. During that time she ran free in a mining camp and wandered through woods or mountains, so that her education has come from Nature rather than from the schoolmaster. She is what we call in England a tomboy, with a strong nature, wild and free, unfettered by any sort of traditions. She is impetuous--volcanic, I was about to say. She is swift in making up her mind and fearless in carrying out her resolutions. On the other hand, I would not have given her the name which I have the honour to bear"--he gave a little stately cough--"had not I thought her to be at bottom a noble woman. I believe that she is capable of heroic self-sacrifice and that anything dishonourable would be repugnant to her."

"Have you her photograph?"

"I brought this with me." He opened a locket and showed us the full face of a very lovely woman. It was not a photograph but an ivory miniature, and the artist had brought out the full effect of the lustrous black hair, the large dark eyes, and the exquisite mouth. Holmes gazed long and earnestly at it. Then he closed the locket and handed it back to Lord St. Simon.

"The young lady came to London, then, and you renewed your acquaintance?"

"Yes, her father brought her over for this last London season. I met her several times, became engaged to her, and have now married her."

"She brought, I understand, a considerable dowry?"

"A fair dowry. Not more than is usual in my family."

"And this, of course, remains to you, since the marriage is a fait accompli?"

"I really have made no inquiries on the subject."

"Very naturally not. Did you see Miss Doran on the day before the wedding?"

"Yes."

"Was she in good spirits?"

"Never better. She kept talking of what we should do in our future lives."

"Indeed! That is very interesting. And on the morning of the wedding?"

"She was as bright as possible--at least until after the ceremony."

"And did you observe any change in her then?"

"Well, to tell the truth, I saw then the first signs that I had ever seen that her temper was just a little sharp. The incident

however, was too trivial to relate and can have no possible bearing upon the case."

"Pray let us have it, for all that."

"Oh, it is childish. She dropped her bouquet as we went towards the vestry. She was passing the front pew at the time, and it fell over into the pew. There was a moment's delay, but the gentleman in the pew handed it up to her again, and it did not appear to be the worse for the fall. Yet when I spoke to her of the matter, she answered me abruptly; and in the carriage, on our way home, she seemed absurdly agitated over this trifling cause."

"Indeed! You say that there was a gentleman in the pew. Some of the general public were present, then?"

"Oh, yes. It is impossible to exclude them when the church is open."

"This gentleman was not one of your wife's friends?"

"No, no; I call him a gentleman by courtesy, but he was quite a common-looking person. I hardly noticed his appearance. But really I think that we are wandering rather far from the point."

"Lady St. Simon, then, returned from the wedding in a less cheerful frame of mind than she had gone to it. What did she do on re-entering her father's house?"

"I saw her in conversation with her maid."

"And who is her maid?"

"Alice is her name. She is an American and came from California

with her."

"A confidential servant?"

"A little too much so. It seemed to me that her mistress allowed her to take great liberties. Still, of course, in America they look upon these things in a different way."

"How long did she speak to this Alice?"

"Oh, a few minutes. I had something else to think of."

"You did not overhear what they said?"

"Lady St. Simon said something about 'jumping a claim.' She was accustomed to use slang of the kind. I have no idea what she meant."

"American slang is very expressive sometimes. And what did your wife do when she finished speaking to her maid?"

"She walked into the breakfast-room."

"On your arm?"

"No, alone. She was very independent in little matters like that. Then, after we had sat down for ten minutes or so, she rose hurriedly, muttered some words of apology, and left the room. She never came back."

"But this maid, Alice, as I understand, deposes that she went to her room, covered her bride's dress with a long ulster, put on a bonnet, and went out."

"Quite so. And she was afterwards seen walking into Hyde Park in company with Flora Millar, a woman who is now in custody, and who had already made a disturbance at Mr. Doran's house that morning."

"Ah, yes. I should like a few particulars as to this young lady, and your relations to her."

Lord St. Simon shrugged his shoulders and raised his eyebrows. "We have been on a friendly footing for some years--I may say on a very friendly footing. She used to be at the Allegro. I have not treated her ungenerously, and she had no just cause of complaint against me, but you know what women are, Mr. Holmes. Flora was a dear little thing, but exceedingly hot-headed and devotedly attached to me. She wrote me dreadful letters when she heard that I was about to be married, and, to tell the truth, the reason why I had the marriage celebrated so quietly was that I feared lest there might be a scandal in the church. She came to Mr. Doran's door just after we returned, and she endeavoured to push her way in, uttering very abusive expressions towards my wife, and even threatening her, but I had foreseen the possibility of something of the sort, and I had two police fellows there in private clothes, who soon pushed her out again. She was quiet when she saw that there was no good in making a row."

"Did your wife hear all this?"

"No, thank goodness, she did not."

"And she was seen walking with this very woman afterwards?"

"Yes. That is what Mr. Lestrade, of Scotland Yard, looks upon as so serious. It is thought that Flora decoyed my wife out and laid

some terrible trap for her."

"Well, it is a possible supposition."

"You think so, too?"

"I did not say a probable one. But you do not yourself look upon this as likely?"

"I do not think Flora would hurt a fly."

"Still, jealousy is a strange transformer of characters. Pray what is your own theory as to what took place?"

"Well, really, I came to seek a theory, not to propound one. I have given you all the facts. Since you ask me, however, I may say that it has occurred to me as possible that the excitement of this affair, the consciousness that she had made so immense a social stride, had the effect of causing some little nervous disturbance in my wife."

"In short, that she had become suddenly deranged?"

"Well, really, when I consider that she has turned her back--I will not say upon me, but upon so much that many have aspired to without success--I can hardly explain it in any other fashion."

"Well, certainly that is also a conceivable hypothesis," said Holmes, smiling. "And now, Lord St. Simon, I think that I have nearly all my data. May I ask whether you were seated at the breakfast-table so that you could see out of the window?"

"We could see the other side of the road and the Park."

"Quite so. Then I do not think that I need to detain you longer. I shall communicate with you."

"Should you be fortunate enough to solve this problem," said our client, rising.

"I have solved it."

"Eh? What was that?"

"I say that I have solved it."

"Where, then, is my wife?"

"That is a detail which I shall speedily supply."

Lord St. Simon shook his head. "I am afraid that it will take wiser heads than yours or mine," he remarked, and bowing in a stately, old-fashioned manner he departed.

"It is very good of Lord St. Simon to honour my head by putting it on a level with his own," said Sherlock Holmes, laughing. "I think that I shall have a whisky and soda and a cigar after all this cross-questioning. I had formed my conclusions as to the case before our client came into the room."

"My dear Holmes!"

"I have notes of several similar cases, though none, as I remarked before, which were quite as prompt. My whole examination served to turn my conjecture into a certainty. Circumstantial evidence is occasionally very convincing, as when you find a trout in the milk, to quote Thoreau's example."

"But I have heard all that you have heard."

"Without, however, the knowledge of pre-existing cases which serves me so well. There was a parallel instance in Aberdeen some years back, and something on very much the same lines at Munich the year after the Franco-Prussian War. It is one of these cases--but, hullo, here is Lestrade! Good-afternoon, Lestrade! You will find an extra tumbler upon the sideboard, and there are cigars in the box."

The official detective was attired in a pea-jacket and cravat, which gave him a decidedly nautical appearance, and he carried a black canvas bag in his hand. With a short greeting he seated himself and lit the cigar which had been offered to him.

"What's up, then?" asked Holmes with a twinkle in his eye. "You look dissatisfied."

"And I feel dissatisfied. It is this infernal St. Simon marriage case. I can make neither head nor tail of the business."

"Really! You surprise me."

"Who ever heard of such a mixed affair? Every clue seems to slip through my fingers. I have been at work upon it all day."

"And very wet it seems to have made you," said Holmes laying his hand upon the arm of the pea-jacket.

"Yes, I have been dragging the Serpentine."

"In heaven's name, what for?"

"In search of the body of Lady St. Simon."

Sherlock Holmes leaned back in his chair and laughed heartily.

"Have you dragged the basin of Trafalgar Square fountain?" he asked.

"Why? What do you mean?"

"Because you have just as good a chance of finding this lady in the one as in the other."

Lestrade shot an angry glance at my companion. "I suppose you know all about it," he snarled.

"Well, I have only just heard the facts, but my mind is made up."

"Oh, indeed! Then you think that the Serpentine plays no part in the matter?"

"I think it very unlikely."

"Then perhaps you will kindly explain how it is that we found this in it?" He opened his bag as he spoke, and tumbled onto the floor a wedding-dress of watered silk, a pair of white satin shoes and a bride's wreath and veil, all discoloured and soaked in water. "There," said he, putting a new wedding-ring upon the top of the pile. "There is a little nut for you to crack, Master Holmes."

"Oh, indeed!" said my friend, blowing blue rings into the air.

"You dragged them from the Serpentine?"

"No. They were found floating near the margin by a park-keeper. They have been identified as her clothes, and it seemed to me

that if the clothes were there the body would not be far off."

"By the same brilliant reasoning, every man's body is to be found in the neighbourhood of his wardrobe. And pray what did you hope to arrive at through this?"

"At some evidence implicating Flora Millar in the disappearance."

"I am afraid that you will find it difficult."

"Are you, indeed, now?" cried Lestrade with some bitterness. "I am afraid, Holmes, that you are not very practical with your deductions and your inferences. You have made two blunders in as many minutes. This dress does implicate Miss Flora Millar."

"And how?"

"In the dress is a pocket. In the pocket is a card-case. In the card-case is a note. And here is the very note." He slapped it down upon the table in front of him. "Listen to this: 'You will see me when all is ready. Come at once. F.H.M.' Now my theory all along has been that Lady St. Simon was decoyed away by Flora Millar, and that she, with confederates, no doubt, was responsible for her disappearance. Here, signed with her initials, is the very note which was no doubt quietly slipped into her hand at the door and which lured her within their reach."

"Very good, Lestrade," said Holmes, laughing. "You really are very fine indeed. Let me see it." He took up the paper in a listless way, but his attention instantly became riveted, and he gave a little cry of satisfaction. "This is indeed important," said he.

"Ha! you find it so?"

"Extremely so. I congratulate you warmly."

Lestrade rose in his triumph and bent his head to look. "Why," he shrieked, "you're looking at the wrong side!"

"On the contrary, this is the right side."

"The right side? You're mad! Here is the note written in pencil over here."

"And over here is what appears to be the fragment of a hotel bill, which interests me deeply."

"There's nothing in it. I looked at it before," said Lestrade.

"Oct. 4th, rooms 8s., breakfast 2s. 6d., cocktail 1s., lunch 2s. 6d., glass sherry, 8d.' I see nothing in that."

"Very likely not. It is most important, all the same. As to the note, it is important also, or at least the initials are, so I congratulate you again."

"I've wasted time enough," said Lestrade, rising. "I believe in hard work and not in sitting by the fire spinning fine theories. Good-day, Mr. Holmes, and we shall see which gets to the bottom of the matter first." He gathered up the garments, thrust them into the bag, and made for the door.

"Just one hint to you, Lestrade," drawled Holmes before his rival vanished; "I will tell you the true solution of the matter. Lady St. Simon is a myth. There is not, and there never has been, any such person."

Lestrade looked sadly at my companion. Then he turned to me, tapped his forehead three times, shook his head solemnly, and hurried away.

He had hardly shut the door behind him when Holmes rose to put on his overcoat. "There is something in what the fellow says about outdoor work," he remarked, "so I think, Watson, that I must leave you to your papers for a little."

It was after five o'clock when Sherlock Holmes left me, but I had no time to be lonely, for within an hour there arrived a confectioner's man with a very large flat box. This he unpacked with the help of a youth whom he had brought with him, and presently, to my very great astonishment, a quite epicurean little cold supper began to be laid out upon our humble lodging-house mahogany. There were a couple of brace of cold woodcock, a pheasant, a *pâté de foie gras* pie with a group of ancient and cobwebby bottles. Having laid out all these luxuries, my two visitors vanished away, like the *genii* of the Arabian Nights, with no explanation save that the things had been paid for and were ordered to this address.

Just before nine o'clock Sherlock Holmes stepped briskly into the room. His features were gravely set, but there was a light in his eye which made me think that he had not been disappointed in his conclusions.

"They have laid the supper, then," he said, rubbing his hands.

"You seem to expect company. They have laid for five."

"Yes, I fancy we may have some company dropping in," said he. "I am surprised that Lord St. Simon has not already arrived. Ha! I fancy that I hear his step now upon the stairs."

It was indeed our visitor of the afternoon who came bustling in, dangling his glasses more vigorously than ever, and with a very perturbed expression upon his aristocratic features.

"My messenger reached you, then?" asked Holmes.

"Yes, and I confess that the contents startled me beyond measure. Have you good authority for what you say?"

"The best possible."

Lord St. Simon sank into a chair and passed his hand over his forehead.

"What will the Duke say," he murmured, "when he hears that one of the family has been subjected to such humiliation?"

"It is the purest accident. I cannot allow that there is any humiliation."

"Ah, you look on these things from another standpoint."

"I fail to see that anyone is to blame. I can hardly see how the lady could have acted otherwise, though her abrupt method of doing it was undoubtedly to be regretted. Having no mother, she had no one to advise her at such a crisis."

"It was a slight, sir, a public slight," said Lord St. Simon, tapping his fingers upon the table.

"You must make allowance for this poor girl, placed in so unprecedented a position."

"I will make no allowance. I am very angry indeed, and I have been shamefully used."

"I think that I heard a ring," said Holmes. "Yes, there are steps on the landing. If I cannot persuade you to take a lenient view of the matter, Lord St. Simon, I have brought an advocate here who may be more successful." He opened the door and ushered in a lady and gentleman. "Lord St. Simon," said he "allow me to introduce you to Mr. and Mrs. Francis Hay Moulton. The lady, I think, you have already met."

At the sight of these newcomers our client had sprung from his seat and stood very erect, with his eyes cast down and his hand thrust into the breast of his frock-coat, a picture of offended dignity. The lady had taken a quick step forward and had held out her hand to him, but he still refused to raise his eyes. It was as well for his resolution, perhaps, for her pleading face was one which it was hard to resist.

"You're angry, Robert," said she. "Well, I guess you have every cause to be."

"Pray make no apology to me," said Lord St. Simon bitterly.

"Oh, yes, I know that I have treated you real bad and that I should have spoken to you before I went; but I was kind of rattled, and from the time when I saw Frank here again I just didn't know what I was doing or saying. I only wonder I didn't fall down and do a faint right there before the altar."

"Perhaps, Mrs. Moulton, you would like my friend and me to leave the room while you explain this matter?"

"If I may give an opinion," remarked the strange gentleman,

"we've had just a little too much secrecy over this business already. For my part, I should like all Europe and America to hear the rights of it." He was a small, wiry, sunburnt man, clean-shaven, with a sharp face and alert manner.

"Then I'll tell our story right away," said the lady. "Frank here and I met in '84, in McQuire's camp, near the Rockies, where pa was working a claim. We were engaged to each other, Frank and I; but then one day father struck a rich pocket and made a pile, while poor Frank here had a claim that petered out and came to nothing. The richer pa grew the poorer was Frank; so at last pa wouldn't hear of our engagement lasting any longer, and he took me away to 'Frisco. Frank wouldn't throw up his hand, though; so he followed me there, and he saw me without pa knowing anything about it. It would only have made him mad to know, so we just fixed it all up for ourselves. Frank said that he would go and make his pile, too, and never come back to claim me until he had as much as pa. So then I promised to wait for him to the end of time and pledged myself not to marry anyone else while he lived. 'Why shouldn't we be married right away, then,' said he, 'and then I will feel sure of you; and I won't claim to be your husband until I come back?' Well, we talked it over, and he had fixed it all up so nicely, with a clergyman all ready in waiting, that we just did it right there; and then Frank went off to seek his fortune, and I went back to pa.

"The next I heard of Frank was that he was in Montana, and then he went prospecting in Arizona, and then I heard of him from New Mexico. After that came a long newspaper story about how a miners' camp had been attacked by Apache Indians, and there was my Frank's name among the killed. I fainted dead away, and I was very sick for months after. Pa thought I had a decline and took me to half the doctors in 'Frisco. Not a word of news came for a year and more, so that I never doubted that Frank was really

dead. Then Lord St. Simon came to 'Frisco, and we came to London, and a marriage was arranged, and pa was very pleased, but I felt all the time that no man on this earth would ever take the place in my heart that had been given to my poor Frank.

"Still, if I had married Lord St. Simon, of course I'd have done my duty by him. We can't command our love, but we can our actions. I went to the altar with him with the intention to make him just as good a wife as it was in me to be. But you may imagine what I felt when, just as I came to the altar rails, I glanced back and saw Frank standing and looking at me out of the first pew. I thought it was his ghost at first; but when I looked again there he was still, with a kind of question in his eyes, as if to ask me whether I were glad or sorry to see him. I wonder I didn't drop. I know that everything was turning round, and the words of the clergyman were just like the buzz of a bee in my ear. I didn't know what to do. Should I stop the service and make a scene in the church? I glanced at him again, and he seemed to know what I was thinking, for he raised his finger to his lips to tell me to be still. Then I saw him scribble on a piece of paper, and I knew that he was writing me a note. As I passed his pew on the way out I dropped my bouquet over to him, and he slipped the note into my hand when he returned me the flowers. It was only a line asking me to join him when he made the sign to me to do so. Of course I never doubted for a moment that my first duty was now to him, and I determined to do just whatever he might direct.

"When I got back I told my maid, who had known him in California, and had always been his friend. I ordered her to say nothing, but to get a few things packed and my ulster ready. I know I ought to have spoken to Lord St. Simon, but it was dreadful hard before his mother and all those great people. I just made up my mind to run away and explain afterwards. I hadn't been at the table ten minutes before I saw Frank out of the window at the other side of

the road. He beckoned to me and then began walking into the Park. I slipped out, put on my things, and followed him. Some woman came talking something or other about Lord St. Simon to me--seemed to me from the little I heard as if he had a little secret of his own before marriage also--but I managed to get away from her and soon overtook Frank. We got into a cab together, and away we drove to some lodgings he had taken in Gordon Square, and that was my true wedding after all those years of waiting. Frank had been a prisoner among the Apaches, had escaped, came on to 'Frisco, found that I had given him up for dead and had gone to England, followed me there, and had come upon me at last on the very morning of my second wedding."

"I saw it in a paper," explained the American. "It gave the name and the church but not where the lady lived."

"Then we had a talk as to what we should do, and Frank was all for openness, but I was so ashamed of it all that I felt as if I should like to vanish away and never see any of them again--just sending a line to pa, perhaps, to show him that I was alive. It was awful to me to think of all those lords and ladies sitting round that breakfast-table and waiting for me to come back. So Frank took my wedding-clothes and things and made a bundle of them, so that I should not be traced, and dropped them away somewhere where no one could find them. It is likely that we should have gone on to Paris to-morrow, only that this good gentleman, Mr. Holmes, came round to us this evening, though how he found us is more than I can think, and he showed us very clearly and kindly that I was wrong and that Frank was right, and that we should be putting ourselves in the wrong if we were so secret. Then he offered to give us a chance of talking to Lord St. Simon alone, and so we came right away round to his rooms at once. Now, Robert, you have heard it all, and I am very sorry if I have given you pain, and I hope that you do not think very

meanly of me."

Lord St. Simon had by no means relaxed his rigid attitude, but had listened with a frowning brow and a compressed lip to this long narrative.

"Excuse me," he said, "but it is not my custom to discuss my most intimate personal affairs in this public manner."

"Then you won't forgive me? You won't shake hands before I go?"

"Oh, certainly, if it would give you any pleasure." He put out his hand and coldly grasped that which she extended to him.

"I had hoped," suggested Holmes, "that you would have joined us in a friendly supper."

"I think that there you ask a little too much," responded his Lordship. "I may be forced to acquiesce in these recent developments, but I can hardly be expected to make merry over them. I think that with your permission I will now wish you all a very good-night." He included us all in a sweeping bow and stalked out of the room.

"Then I trust that you at least will honour me with your company," said Sherlock Holmes. "It is always a joy to meet an American, Mr. Moulton, for I am one of those who believe that the folly of a monarch and the blundering of a minister in far-gone years will not prevent our children from being some day citizens of the same world-wide country under a flag which shall be a quartering of the Union Jack with the Stars and Stripes."

"The case has been an interesting one," remarked Holmes when our visitors had left us, "because it serves to show very clearly how

simple the explanation may be of an affair which at first sight seems to be almost inexplicable. Nothing could be more natural than the sequence of events as narrated by this lady, and nothing stranger than the result when viewed, for instance, by Mr. Lestrade of Scotland Yard."

"You were not yourself at fault at all, then?"

"From the first, two facts were very obvious to me, the one that the lady had been quite willing to undergo the wedding ceremony, the other that she had repented of it within a few minutes of returning home. Obviously something had occurred during the morning, then, to cause her to change her mind. What could that something be? She could not have spoken to anyone when she was out, for she had been in the company of the bridegroom. Had she seen someone, then? If she had, it must be someone from America because she had spent so short a time in this country that she could hardly have allowed anyone to acquire so deep an influence over her that the mere sight of him would induce her to change her plans so completely. You see we have already arrived, by a process of exclusion, at the idea that she might have seen an American. Then who could this American be, and why should he possess so much influence over her? It might be a lover; it might be a husband. Her young womanhood had, I knew, been spent in rough scenes and under strange conditions. So far I had got before I ever heard Lord St. Simon's narrative. When he told us of a man in a pew, of the change in the bride's manner, of so transparent a device for obtaining a note as the dropping of a bouquet, of her resort to her confidential maid, and of her very significant allusion to claim-jumping--which in miners' parlance means taking possession of that which another person has a prior claim to--the whole situation became absolutely clear. She had gone off with a man, and the man was either a lover or was a previous husband--the chances being in favour of the latter."

"And how in the world did you find them?"

"It might have been difficult, but friend Lestrade held information in his hands the value of which he did not himself know. The initials were, of course, of the highest importance, but more valuable still was it to know that within a week he had settled his bill at one of the most select London hotels."

"How did you deduce the select?"

"By the select prices. Eight shillings for a bed and eightpence for a glass of sherry pointed to one of the most expensive hotels. There are not many in London which charge at that rate. In the second one which I visited in Northumberland Avenue, I learned by an inspection of the book that Francis H. Moulton, an American gentleman, had left only the day before, and on looking over the entries against him, I came upon the very items which I had seen in the duplicate bill. His letters were to be forwarded to 226 Gordon Square; so thither I travelled, and being fortunate enough to find the loving couple at home, I ventured to give them some paternal advice and to point out to them that it would be better in every way that they should make their position a little clearer both to the general public and to Lord St. Simon in particular. I invited them to meet him here, and, as you see, I made him keep the appointment."

"But with no very good result," I remarked. "His conduct was certainly not very gracious."

"Ah, Watson," said Holmes, smiling, "perhaps you would not be very gracious either, if, after all the trouble of wooing and wedding, you found yourself deprived in an instant of wife and of fortune. I think that we may judge Lord St. Simon very mercifully

and thank our stars that we are never likely to find ourselves in the same position. Draw your chair up and hand me my violin, for the only problem we have still to solve is how to while away these bleak autumnal evenings."

*from The Project Gutenberg EBook #1661 of
The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes, by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle

THE SMILER*

By Albert Hernhunter

"Your name?"

"Cole. Martin Cole."

"Your profession?"

"A very important one. I am a literary agent specializing in science fiction. I sell the work of various authors to magazine and book publishers."

The Coroner paused to study Cole; to ponder the thin, mirthless smile. The Coroner said, "Mr. Cole, this inquest has been called to look into the death of one Sanford Smith, who was found near your home with a gun in his hand and a bullet in his brain. The theory of suicide has been—"

"—rather hard to rationalize?"

The Coroner blinked. "You could put it that way."

"I would put it even stronger. The theory is obviously ridiculous. It was a weak cover-up. The best I could do under the circumstances."

"You are saying that you killed Sanford Smith?"

"Of course."

The Coroner glanced at his six-man jury, at the two police officers, at the scattering of spectators. They all seemed stunned. Even the reporter sent to cover the hearing made no move toward the telephone. The Coroner could think of only the obvious question: "Why did you kill him?"

"He was dangerous to us."

"Whom do you mean by us?"

"We Martians, who plan to take over your world."

The Coroner was disappointed. A lunatic. But a lunatic can murder. Best to proceed, the Coroner thought. "I was not aware that we have Martians to contend with."

"If I'd had the right weapon to use on Smith, you wouldn't be aware of it now. We still exercise caution."

The Coroner felt a certain pity. "Why did you kill Smith?"

"We Martians have found science-fiction writers to be our greatest danger. Through the medium of imaginative fiction, such writers have more than once revealed our plans. If the public suddenly realized that—"

The Coroner broke in. "You killed Smith because he revealed something in his writings?"

"Yes. He refused to take my word that it was unsalable. He threatened to submit it direct. It was vital material."

"But there are many other such writers. You can't control—"

"We control ninety percent of the output. We have concentrated on the field and all of the science-fiction agencies are in our hands. This control was imperative."

"I see." The Coroner spoke in the gentle tones one uses with the insane. "Any writing dangerous to your cause is deleted or changed by the agents."

"Not exactly. The agent usually persuades the writer to make any such changes, as the agent is considered an authority on what will or will not sell."

"The writers always agree?"

"Not always. If stubbornness is encountered, the agent merely shelves the manuscript and tells the writer it has been repeatedly rejected."

The Coroner glanced at the two policemen. Both were obviously puzzled. They returned the Coroner's look, apparently ready to move on his order.

The thin, mirthless smile was still on Cole's lips. Maniacal violence could lie just behind it. Possibly Cole was armed. Better to play for time—try to quiet the madness within. The Coroner continued speaking. "You Martians have infiltrated other fields also?"

"Oh, yes. We are in government, industry, education. We are everywhere. We have, of course, concentrated mainly upon the ranks of labor and in the masses of ordinary, everyday people. It is from these sources that we will draw our shock troops when the time comes."

"That time will be—?"

"Soon, very soon."

The Coroner could not forebear a smile. "You find the science-fiction writers more dangerous than the true scientists?"

"Oh, yes. The scientific mind tends to reject anything science disproves." There was now a mocking edge to Cole's voice. "Science can easily prove we do not exist."

"But the science-fiction writer?"

"The danger from the imaginative mind cannot be overestimated."

The Coroner knew he must soon order the officers to lay hands upon this madman. He regretted his own lack of experience with such situations. He tried to put a soothing, confidential note into his voice. "You said a moment ago that if you'd had the right kind of weapon to use on Smith—"

Cole reached into his pocket and brought out what appeared to be a fountain pen. "This. It kills instantly and leaves no mark whatever. Heart failure is invariably stated as the cause of death."

The Coroner felt better. Obviously, Cole was not armed. As the Coroner raised a hand to signal the officers, Cole said, "You understand, of course, that I can't let you live."

"Take this man into custody."

The police officers did not move. The Coroner turned on them sharply. They were smiling. Cole pointed the fountain pen. The Coroner felt a sharp chill on his flesh. He looked at the jury, at the newspaperman, the spectators. They were all smiling cold, thin, terrible smiles....

A short time later, the newspaperman phoned in his story. The afternoon editions carried it:

CORONER BELL DIES OF HEART ATTACK

Shortly after this morning's inquest, which resulted in a jury verdict of suicide in the case of Sanford Smith, Coroner James Bell dropped dead of heart failure in the hearing room of the County building. Mr. Bell leaves a wife and—

THE END

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The Smiler, by Albert Hernhunter

THE GIRL WHO GOT RATTLED*

by Stewart Edward White

This is one of the stories of Alfred. There are many of them still floating around the West, for Alfred was in his time very well known. He was a little man, and he was bashful. That is the most that can be said against him; but he was very little and very bashful. When on horseback his legs hardly reached the lower body-line of his mount, and only his extreme agility enabled him to get on successfully. When on foot, strangers were inclined to call him "sonny." In company he never advanced an opinion. If things did not go according to his ideas, he reconstructed the ideas, and made the best of it--only he could make the most efficient best of the poorest ideas of any man on the plains. His attitude was a perpetual sidling apology. It has been said that Alfred killed his men diffidently, without enthusiasm, as though loth to take the responsibility, and this in the pioneer days on the plains was either frivolous affectation, or else--Alfred. With women he was lost. Men would have staked their last ounce of dust at odds that he had never in his life made a definite assertion of fact to one of the opposite sex. When it became absolutely necessary to change a woman's preconceived notions as to what she should do--as, for instance, discouraging her riding through quicksand--he would persuade somebody else to issue the advice. And he would cower in the background blushing his absurd little blushes at his second-hand temerity. Add to this narrow, sloping shoulders, a soft voice, and a diminutive pink-and-white face.

But Alfred could read the prairie like a book. He could ride anything, shoot accurately, was at heart afraid of nothing, and could fight like a little catamount when occasion for it really arose. Among those who knew, Alfred was considered one of the best scouts on the plains. That is why Caldwell, the capitalist, engaged him when he took his daughter out to Deadwood.

Miss Caldwell was determined to go to Deadwood. A limited experience of the lady's sort, where they have wooden floors to the tents, towels to the tent-poles, and expert cooks to the delectation of the campers, had convinced her that "roughing it" was her favorite recreation. So, of course, Caldwell senior had, sooner or later, to take her across the plains on his annual trip. This was at the time when wagon-trains went by way of Pierre on the north, and the South Fork on the south. Incidental Indians, of homicidal tendencies and undeveloped ideas as to the propriety of doing what they were told, made things interesting occasionally, but not often. There was really no danger to a good-sized train.

The daughter had a fiancé named Allen who liked roughing it, too; so he went along. He and Miss Caldwell rigged themselves out bountifully, and prepared to enjoy the trip.

At Pierre the train of eight wagons was made up, and they were joined by Alfred and Billy Knapp. These two men were interesting, but tyrannical on one or two points--such as getting out of sight of the train, for instance. They were also deficient in reasons for their tyranny. The young people chafed, and, finding Billy Knapp either imperturbable or thick-skinned, they turned their attention to Alfred. Allen annoyed Alfred, and Miss Caldwell thoughtlessly approved of Allen. Between them they succeeded often in shocking fearfully all the little man's finer sensibilities. If it had been a question of Allen alone, the annoyance would soon have ceased. Alfred would simply have bashfully killed him. But because of his innate courtesy, which so saturated him that his philosophy of life was thoroughly tinged by it, he was silent and inactive.

There is a great deal to recommend a plains journey at first. Later, there is nothing at all to recommend it. It has the same monotony as a voyage at sea, only there is less living room, and, instead of being carried, you must progress to a great extent by your own volition. Also

the food is coarse, the water poor, and you cannot bathe. To a plainsman, or a man who has the instinct, these things are as nothing in comparison with the charm of the outdoor life, and the pleasing tingling of adventure. But woman is a creature wedded to comfort. She also has a strange instinctive desire to be entirely alone every once in a while, probably because her experiences, while not less numerous than man's, are mainly psychical, and she needs occasionally time to get "thought up to date." So Miss Caldwell began to get very impatient.

The afternoon of the sixth day Alfred, Miss Caldwell, and Allen rode along side by side. Alfred was telling a self-effacing story of adventure, and Miss Caldwell was listening carelessly because she had nothing else to do. Allen chaffed lazily when the fancy took him.

"I happened to have a limb broken at the time," Alfred was observing, parenthetically, in his soft tones, "and so----"

"What kind of a limb?" asked the young Easterner, with direct brutality. He glanced with a half-humorous aside at the girl, to whom the little man had been mainly addressing himself.

Alfred hesitated, blushed, lost the thread of his tale, and finally in great confusion reined back his horse by the harsh Spanish bit. He fell to the rear of the little wagon-train, where he hung his head, and went hot and cold by turns in thinking of such an indiscretion before a lady.

The young Easterner spurred up on the right of the girl's mount.

"He's the queerest little fellow _I_ ever saw!" he observed, with a laugh. "Sorry to spoil his story. Was it a good one?"

"It might have been if you hadn't spoiled it," answered the girl, flicking her horse's ears mischievously. The animal danced. "What did you do it for?"

"Oh, just to see him squirm. He'll think about that all the rest of the afternoon, and will hardly dare look you in the face next time you meet."

"I know. Isn't he funny? The other morning he came around the corner of the wagon and caught me with my hair down. I _wish_ you could have seen him!"

She laughed gayly at the memory.

"Let's get ahead of the dust," she suggested.

They drew aside to the firm turf of the prairie and put their horses to a slow lope. Once well ahead of the canvas-covered schooners they slowed down to a walk again.

"Alfred says we'll see them to-morrow," said the girl.

"See what?"

"Why, the Hills! They'll show like a dark streak, down past that butte there--what's its name?"

"Porcupine Tail."

"Oh, yes. And after that it's only three days. Are you glad?"

"Are you?"

"Yes, I believe I am. This life is fun at first, but there's a certain monotony in making your toilet where you have to duck your head because

you haven't room to raise your hands, and this barrelled water palls after a time. I think I'll be glad to see a house again. People like camping about so long----"

"It hasn't gone back on me yet."

"Well, you're a man and can do things."

"Can't you do things?"

"You know I can't. What do you suppose they'd say if I were to ride out just that way for two miles? They'd have a fit."

"Who'd have a fit? Nobody but Alfred, and I didn't know you'd gotten afraid of him yet! I say, just _let's_! We'll have a race, and then come right back." The young man looked boyishly eager.

"It would be nice," she mused. They gazed into each other's eyes like a pair of children, and laughed.

"Why shouldn't we?" urged the young man. "I'm dead sick of staying in the moving circle of these confounded wagons. What's the sense of it all, anyway?"

"Why, Indians, I suppose," said the girl, doubtfully.

"Indians!" he replied, with contempt. "Indians! We haven't seen a sign of one since we left Pierre. I don't believe there's one in the whole blasted country. Besides, you know what Alfred said at our last camp?"

"What did Alfred say?"

"Alfred said he hadn't seen even a teepee-trail, and that they must be all up hunting buffalo. Besides that, you don't imagine for a moment

that your father would take you all this way to Deadwood just for a lark, if there was the slightest danger, do you?"

"I don't know; I made him."

She looked out over the long sweeping descent to which they were coming, and the long sweeping ascent that lay beyond. The breeze and the sun played with the prairie grasses, the breeze riffling them over, and the sun silvering their under surfaces thus exposed. It was strangely peaceful, and one almost expected to hear the hum of bees as in a New England orchard. In it all was no sign of life.

"We'd get lost," she said, finally.

"Oh, no, we wouldn't!" he asserted with all the eagerness of the amateur plainsman. "I've got that all figured out. You see, our train is going on a line with that butte behind us and the sun. So if we go ahead, and keep our shadows just pointing to the butte, we'll be right in their line of march."

He looked to her for admiration of his cleverness. She seemed convinced. She agreed, and sent him back to her wagon for some article of invented necessity. While he was gone she slipped softly over the little hill to the right, cantered rapidly over two more, and slowed down with a sigh of satisfaction. One alone could watch the directing shadow as well as two. She was free and alone. It was the one thing she had desired for the last six days of the long plains journey, and she enjoyed it now to the full. No one had seen her go. The drivers droned stupidly along, as was their wont; the occupants of the wagons slept, as was their wont; and the diminutive Alfred was hiding his blushes behind clouds of dust in the rear, as was not his wont at all. He had been severely shocked, and he might have brooded over it all the afternoon, if a discovery had not startled him to activity.

On a bare spot of the prairie he discerned the print of a hoof. It was not that of one of the train's animals. Alfred knew this, because just to one side of it, caught under a grass-blade so cunningly that only the little scout's eyes could have discerned it at all, was a single blue bead. Alfred rode out on the prairie to right and left, and found the hoof-prints of about thirty ponies. He pushed his hat back and wrinkled his brow, for the one thing he was looking for he could not find--the two narrow furrows made by the ends of teepee-poles dragging along on either side of the ponies. The absence of these indicated that the band was composed entirely of bucks, and bucks were likely to mean mischief.

He pushed ahead of the whole party, his eyes fixed earnestly on the ground. At the top of the hill he encountered the young Easterner. The latter looked puzzled, in a half-humorous way.

"I left Miss Caldwell here a half-minute ago," he observed to Alfred, "and I guess she's given me the slip. Scold her good for me when she comes in--will you?" He grinned, with good-natured malice at the idea of Alfred's scolding anyone.

Then Alfred surprised him.

The little man straightened suddenly in his saddle and uttered a fervent curse. After a brief circle about the prairie, he returned to the young man.

"You go back to th' wagons, and wake up Billy Knapp, and tell him this--that I've gone scoutin' some, and I want him to _watch out_. Understand? _Watch out!_"

"What?" began the Easterner, bewildered.

"I'm a-goin' to find her," said the little man, decidedly.

"You don't think there's any danger, do you?" asked the Easterner, in anxious tones. "Can't I help you?"

"You do as I tell you," replied the little man, shortly, and rode away.

He followed Miss Caldwell's trail quite rapidly, for the trail was fresh. As long as he looked intently for hoof-marks, nothing was to be seen, the prairie was apparently virgin; but by glancing the eye forty or fifty yards ahead, a faint line was discernible through the grasses.

Alfred came upon Miss Caldwell seated quietly on her horse in the very centre of a prairie-dog town, and so, of course, in the midst of an area of comparatively desert character. She was amusing herself by watching the marmots as they barked, or watched, or peeped at her, according to their distance from her. The sight of Alfred was not welcome, for he frightened the marmots.

When he saw Miss Caldwell, Alfred grew bashful again. He sidled his horse up to her and blushed.

"I'll show you th' way back, miss," he said, diffidently.

"Thank you," replied Miss Caldwell, with a slight coldness, "I can find my own way back."

"Yes, of course," hastened Alfred, in an agony. "But don't you think we ought to start back now? I'd like to go with you, miss, if you'd let me. You see the afternoon's quite late."

Miss Caldwell cast a quizzical eye at the sun.

"Why, it's hours yet till dark!" she said, amusedly.

Then Alfred surprised Miss Caldwell.

His diffident manner suddenly left him. He jumped like lightning from his horse, threw the reins over the animal's head so he would stand, and ran around to face Miss Caldwell.

"Here, jump down!" he commanded.

The soft Southern burr of his ordinary conversation had given place to a clear incisiveness. Miss Caldwell looked at him amazed.

Seeing that she did not at once obey, Alfred actually began to fumble hastily with the straps that held her riding-skirt in place. This was so unusual in the bashful Alfred that Miss Caldwell roused and slipped lightly to the ground.

"Now what?" she asked.

Alfred, without replying, drew the bit to within a few inches of the animal's hoofs, and tied both fetlocks firmly together with the double-loop. This brought the pony's nose down close to his shackled feet. Then he did the same thing with his own beast. Thus neither animal could so much as hobble one way or the other. They were securely moored.

Alfred stepped a few paces to the eastward. Miss Caldwell followed.

"Sit down," said he.

Miss Caldwell obeyed with some nervousness. She did not understand at all, and that made her afraid. She began to have a dim fear lest Alfred might have gone crazy. His next move strengthened this suspicion. He walked away ten feet and raised his hand over his head, palm forward. She watched him so intently that for a moment she saw nothing else. Then

she followed the direction of his gaze, and uttered a little sobbing cry.

Just below the sky-line of the first slope to eastward was silhouetted a figure on horseback. The figure on horseback sat motionless.

"We're in for fight," said Alfred, coming back after a moment. "He won't answer my peace-sign, and he's a Sioux. We can't make a run for it through this dog-town. We've just got to stand 'em off."

He threw down and back the lever of his old 44 Winchester, and softly uncocked the arm. Then he sat down by Miss Caldwell.

From various directions, silently, warriors on horseback sprang into sight and moved dignifiedly toward the first-comer, forming at the last a band of perhaps thirty men. They talked together for a moment, and then one by one, at regular intervals, detached themselves and began circling at full speed to the left, throwing themselves behind their horses, and yelling shrill-voiced, but firing no shot as yet.

"They'll rush us," speculated Alfred. "We're too few to monkey with this way. This is a bluff."

The circle about the two was now complete. After watching the whirl of figures a few minutes, and the motionless landscape beyond, the eye became dizzied and confused.

"They won't have no picnic," went on Alfred, with a little chuckle.

"Dog-hole's as bad fer them as fer us. They don't know how to fight. If they was to come in on all sides, I couldn't handle 'em, but they always rush in a bunch, like _damn_ fools!" and then Alfred became suffused with blushes, and commenced to apologise abjectly and profusely to a girl who had heard neither the word nor its atonement. The savages and the approaching fight were all she could think of.

Suddenly one of the Sioux threw himself forward under his horse's neck and fired. The bullet went wild, of course, but it shrieked with the rising inflection of a wind-squall through bared boughs, seeming to come ever nearer. Miss Caldwell screamed and covered her face. The savages yelled in chorus.

The one shot seemed to be the signal for a spattering fire all along the line. Indians never clean their rifles, rarely get good ammunition, and are deficient in the philosophy of hind-sights. Besides this, it is not easy to shoot at long range in a constrained position from a running horse. Alfred watched them contemptuously in silence.

"If they keep that up long enough, the wagon-train may hear 'em," he said, finally. "Wisht we weren't so far to nor-rard. There, it's comin'!" he said, more excitedly.

The chief had paused, and, as the warriors came to him, they threw their ponies back on their haunches, and sat motionless. They turned, the ponies' heads toward the two.

Alfred arose deliberately for a better look.

"Yes, that's right," he said to himself, "that's old Lone Pine, sure thing. I reckon we-all's got to make a good fight!"

The girl had sunk to the ground, and was shaking from head to foot. It is not nice to be shot at in the best of circumstances, but to be shot at by odds of thirty to one, and the thirty of an out-landish and terrifying species, is not nice at all. Miss Caldwell had gone to pieces badly, and Alfred looked grave. He thoughtfully drew from its holster his beautiful Colt's with its ivory handle, and laid it on the grass. Then he blushed hot and cold, and looked at the girl doubtfully. A sudden movement in the group of savages, as the war-chief rode to the

front, decided him.

"Miss Caldwell," he said.

The girl shivered and moaned.

Alfred dropped to his knees and shook her shoulder roughly.

"Look up here," he commanded. "We ain't got but a minute."

Composed a little by the firmness of his tone, she sat up. Her face had gone chalky, and her hair had partly fallen over her eyes.

"Now, listen to every word," he said, rapidly. "Those Injins is goin' to rush us in a minute. P'raps I can break them, but I don't know. In that pistol there, I'll always save two shots--understand?--it's always loaded. If I see it's all up, I'm a-goin' to shoot you with one of 'em, and myself with the other."

"Oh!" cried the girl, her eyes opening wildly. She was paying close enough attention now.

"And if they kill me first"--he reached forward and seized her wrist impressively--"if they kill me first, you must take that pistol and shoot yourself. Understand? Shoot yourself--in the head--here!"

He tapped his forehead with a stubby forefinger.

The girl shrank back in horror. Alfred snapped his teeth together and went on grimly.

"If they get hold of you," he said, with solemnity, "they'll first take off every stitch of your clothes, and when you're quite naked they'll stretch you out on the ground with a raw-hide to each of your arms and

legs. And then they'll drive a stake through the middle of your body into the ground--and leave you there--to die--slowly!"

And the girl believed him, because, incongruously enough, even through her terror she noticed that at this, the most immodest speech of his life, Alfred did not blush. She looked at the pistol lying on the turf with horrified fascination.

The group of Indians, which had up to now remained fully a thousand yards away, suddenly screeched and broke into a run directly toward the dog-town.

There is an indescribable rush in a charge of savages. The little ponies make their feet go so fast, the feathers and trappings of the warriors stream behind so frantically, the whole attitude of horse and man is so eager, that one gets an impression of fearful speed and resistless power. The horizon seems full of Indians.

As if this were not sufficiently terrifying, the air is throbbing with sound. Each Indian pops away for general results as he comes jumping along, and yells shrilly to show what a big warrior he is, while underneath it all is the hurried monotone of hoof-beats becoming ever louder, as the roar of an increasing rainstorm on the roof. It does not seem possible that anything can stop them.

Yet there is one thing that can stop them, if skilfully taken advantage of, and that is their lack of discipline. An Indian will fight hard when cornered, or when heated by lively resistance, but he hates to go into it in cold blood. As he nears the opposing rifle, this feeling gets stronger. So often a man with nerve enough to hold his fire, can break a fierce charge merely by waiting until it is within fifty yards or so, and then suddenly raising the muzzle of his gun. If he had gone to shooting at once, the affair would have become a combat, and the Indians would have ridden him down. As it is, each has had time to think. By the

time the white man is ready to shoot, the suspense has done its work. Each savage knows that but one will fall, but, cold-blooded, he does not want to be that one; and, since in such disciplined fighters it is each for himself, he promptly ducks behind his mount and circles away to the right or the left. The whole band swoops and divides, like a flock of swift-winged terns on a windy day.

This Alfred relied on in the approaching crisis.

The girl watched the wild sweep of the warriors with strained eyes. She had to grasp her wrist firmly to keep from fainting, and she seemed incapable of thought. Alfred sat motionless on a dog-mound, his rifle across his lap. He did not seem in the least disturbed.

"It's good to fight again," he murmured, gently fondling the stock of his rifle. "Come on, ye devils! Oho!" he cried as a warrior's horse went down in a dog-hole, "I thought so!"

His eyes began to shine.

The ponies came skipping here and there, nimbly dodging in and out between the dog-holes. Their riders shot and yelled wildly, but none of the bullets went lower than ten feet. The circle of their advance looked somehow like the surge shoreward of a great wave, and the similarity was heightened by the nodding glimpses of the light eagles' feathers in their hair.

The run across the honey-combed plain was hazardous--even to Indian ponies--and three went down kicking, one after the other. Two of the riders lay stunned. The third sat up and began to rub his knee. The pony belonging to Miss Caldwell, becoming frightened, threw itself and lay on its side, kicking out frantically with its hind legs.

At the proper moment Alfred cocked his rifle and rose swiftly to his

knees. As he did so, the mound on which he had been kneeling caved into the hole beneath it, and threw him forward on his face. With a furious curse, he sprang to his feet and levelled his rifle at the thick of the press. The scheme worked. In a flash every savage disappeared behind his

pony, and nothing was to be seen but an arm and a leg. The band divided on either hand as promptly as though the signal for such a drill had been given, and swept gracefully around in two long circles until it reined up motionless at nearly the exact point from which it had started on its imposing charge. Alfred had not fired a shot.

He turned to the girl with a short laugh.

She lay face upward on the ground, staring at the sky with wide-open, horror-stricken eyes. In her brow was a small blackened hole, and under her head, which lay strangely flat against the earth, the grasses had turned red. Near her hand lay the heavy Colt's 44.

Alfred looked at her a minute without winking. Then he nodded his head.

"It was 'cause I fell down that hole--she thought they'd got me!" he said aloud to himself. "Pore little gal! She hadn't ought to have did it!"

He blushed deeply, and, turning his face away, pulled down her skirt until it covered her ankles. Then he picked up his Winchester and fired three shots. The first hit directly back of the ear one of the stunned Indians who had fallen with his horse. The second went through the other stunned Indian's chest. The third caught the Indian with the broken leg between the shoulders just as he tried to get behind his struggling pony.

Shortly after, Billy Knapp and the wagon-train came along.

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THE COFFIN OF SNAKES+

by Charles Skinner

No one knew how it was that Lizon gained the love of Julianne, at L'Anse Creuse (near Detroit), for she was a girl of sweet and pious disposition, the daughter of a God-fearing farmer, while Lizon was a dark, ill-favored wretch, who had come among the people nobody knew whence, and lived on the profits of a tap-room where the vilest liquor was sold, and where gaming, fighting, and carousing were of nightly occurrence. Perhaps they were right in saying that it was witchcraft. He impudently laid siege to her heart, and when she showed signs of yielding he told her and her friends that he had no intention of marrying her, because he did not believe in religion.

Yet Julianne deserted her comfortable home and went to live with this disreputable scamp in his disreputable tavern, to the scandal of the community, and especially of the priest, who found Lizon's power for evil greater than his own for good, for as the tavern gained in hangers-on the church lost worshippers. One Sunday morning Julianne surprised the people by appearing in church and publicly asking pardon for her wrongdoing. It was the first time she had appeared there since her flight, and she was as one who had roused from a trance or fever-sleep. Her father gladly took her home again, and all went well until New-Year's eve, when the young men called d'Ignolee made the rounds of the settlement to sing and beg meat for the poor—a custom descended from the Druids. They came to the house of Julianne's father and received his welcome and his goods, but their song was interrupted by a cry of distress—Lizon was among the maskers, and Julianne was gone. A crowd of villagers ran to the cabaret and rescued the girl from the room into which the fellow had thrust her, but it was too late—she had lost her reason. Cursing and striking and blaspheming, Lizon was at last confronted by the priest, who told him he had gone too far; that he had been a plague to the people and an enemy to the church. He then pronounced against him the edict of excommunication, and told him that even in his grave he should not rest;

that the church, abandoned by so many victims of his wiles and tyrannies, should be swept away.

The priest left the place forthwith, and the morals of the village fell lower and lower. Everything was against it, too. Blight and storm and insect pest ravaged the fields and orchards, as if nature had engaged to make an expression of the iniquity of the place. Suddenly death came upon Lizon. A pit was dug near his tavern and he was placed in a coffin, but as the box was lowered it was felt to grow lighter, while there poured from it a swarm of fat and filthy snakes. The fog that overspread the earth that morning seemed to blow by in human forms, the grave rolled like a wave after it had been covered, and after darkness fell a blue will-o'-the-wisp danced over it. A storm set in, heaping the billows on shore until the church was undermined, and with a crash it fell into the seething flood. But the curse had passed, and when a new chapel was built the old evils had deserted L'Anse Crease.

PICHON & SONS, OF THE CROIX ROUSSE*

by J. Sheridan Le Fanu

Giraudier, _pharmacien, première classe_, is the legend, recorded in huge, ill-proportioned letters, which directs the attention of the stranger to the most prosperous-looking shop in the grand _place_ of La Croix Rousse, a well-known suburb of the beautiful city of Lyons, which has its share of the shabby gentility and poor pretence common to the suburban commerce of great towns.

Giraudier is not only _pharmacien_ but _propriétaire_, though not by inheritance; his possession of one of the prettiest and most prolific of the small vineyards in the beautiful suburb, and a charming inconvenient house, with low ceilings, liliputian bedrooms, and a profusion of _persiennes_, _jalousies_, and _contrevents_, comes by purchase. This enviable little _terre_ was sold by the Nation, when that terrible abstraction transacted the public business of France; and it was bought very cheaply by the strong-minded father of the Giraudier of the present, who was not disturbed by the evil reputation which the place had gained, at a time the peasants of France, having been bullied into a renunciation of religion, eagerly cherished superstition. The Giraudier of the present cherishes the particular superstition in question affectionately; it reminds him of an uncommonly good bargain made in his favor, which is always a pleasant association of ideas, especially to a Frenchman, still more especially to a Lyonnais; and it attracts strangers to his _pharmacie_, and leads to transactions in _Grand Chartreuse_ and _Crème de Roses_, ensuing naturally on the narration of the history of Pichon & Sons. Giraudier is not of aristocratic principles and sympathies; on the contrary, he has decided republican leanings, and considers _Le Progrès_ a masterpiece of journalistic literature; but, as he says simply and strongly, "it is not because a man is a marquis that one is not to keep faith with him; a bad action is not good because it harms a good-for-nothing of a noble; the more when that good-for-nothing is no longer a noble, but _pour rire_." At the

easy price of acquiescence in these sentiments, the stranger hears one of the most authentic, best-remembered, most popular of the many traditions of the bad old times "before General Bonaparte," as Giraudier, who has no sympathy with any later designation of *le grand homme*, calls the Emperor, whose statue one can perceive--a speck in the distance--from the threshold of the *pharmacie*.

The Marquis de Sénanges, in the days of the triumph of the great Revolution, was fortunate enough to be out of France, and wise enough to remain away from that country, though he persisted, long after the old *régime* was as dead as the Ptolemies, in believing it merely suspended, and the Revolution a lamentable accident of vulgar complexion, but happily temporary duration. The Marquis de Sénanges, who affected the *style régence*, and was the politest of infidels and the most refined of voluptuaries, got on indifferently in inappreciative foreign parts; but the members of his family--his brother and sisters, two of whom were guillotined, while the third escaped to Savoy and found refuge there in a convent of her order--got on exceedingly ill in France. If the *ci-devant* Marquis had had plenty of money to expend in such feeble imitations of his accustomed pleasures as were to be had out of Paris, he would not have been much affected by the fate of his relatives. But money became exceedingly scarce; the Marquis had actually beheld many of his peers reduced to the necessity of earning the despicable but indispensable article after many ludicrous fashions. And the duration of this absurd upsetting of law, order, privilege, and property began to assume unexpected and very unpleasant proportions.

The Château de Sénanges, with its surrounding lands, was confiscated to the Nation, during the third year of the "emigration" of the Marquis de Sénanges; and the greater part of the estate was purchased by a thrifty, industrious, and rich *avocat*, named Prosper Alix, a widower with an only daughter. Prosper Alix enjoyed the esteem of the entire

neighborhood. First, he was rich; secondly, he was of a taciturn disposition, and of a neutral tint in politics. He had done well under the old _régime_ and, he was doing well under the new--thank God, or the Supreme Being, or the First Cause, or the goddess Reason herself, for all;--he would have invoked Dagon, Moloch, or Kali, quite as readily as the Saints and the Madonna, who has gone so utterly out of fashion of late. Nobody was afraid to speak out before Prosper Alix; he was not a spy; and though a cold-hearted man, except in the instance of his only daughter, he never harmed anybody.

Very likely it was because he was the last person in the vicinity whom anybody would have suspected of being applied to by the dispossessed family, that the son of the Marquis' brother, a young man of promise, of courage, of intellect, and of morals of decidedly a higher calibre than those actually and traditionally imputed to the family, sought the aid of the new possessor of the Château de Sénanges, which had changed its old title for that of the Maison Alix. The father of M. Paul de Sénanges had perished in the September massacres; his mother had been guillotined

at Lyons; and he--who had been saved by the interposition of a young comrade, whose father had, in the wonderful rotations of the wheel of Fate, acquired authority in the place where he had once esteemed the notice of the nephew of the Marquis a crowning honor for his son--had passed through the common vicissitudes of that dreadful time, which would take a volume for their recital in each individual instance.

Paul de Sénanges was a handsome young fellow, frank, high-spirited, and of a brisk and happy temperament; which, however, modified by the many misfortunes he had undergone, was not permanently changed. He had plenty

of capacity for enjoyment in him still; and as his position was very isolated, and his mind had become enlightened on social and political matters to an extent in which the men of his family would have discovered utter degradation and the women diabolical possession, he

would not have been very unhappy if, under the new condition of things, he could have lived in his native country and gained an honest livelihood. But he could not do that, he was too thoroughly "suspect;" the antecedents of his family were too powerful against him: his only chance would have been to have gone into the popular camp as an extreme, violent partisan, to have out-Heroded the revolutionary Herods; and that Paul de Sénanges was too honest to do. So he was reduced to being thankful that he had escaped with his life, and to watching for an opportunity of leaving France and gaining some country where the reign of liberty, fraternity, and equality was not quite so oppressive.

The long-looked-for opportunity at length offered itself, and Paul de Sénanges was instructed by his uncle the Marquis that he must contrive to reach Marseilles, whence he should be transported to Spain--in which country the illustrious emigrant was then residing--by a certain named date. His uncle's communication arrived safely, and the plan proposed seemed a secure and eligible one. Only in two respects was it calculated to make Paul de Sénanges thoughtful. The first was, that his uncle should take any interest in the matter of his safety; the second, what could be the nature of a certain deposit which the Marquis's letter directed him to procure, if possible, from the Château de Sénanges. The fact of this injunction explained, in some measure, the first of the two difficulties. It was plain that whatever were the contents of this packet which he was to seek for, according to the indications marked on a ground-plan drawn by his uncle and enclosed in the letter, the Marquis wanted them, and could not procure them except by the agency of his nephew. That the Marquis should venture to direct Paul de Sénanges to put himself in communication with Prosper Alix, would have been surprising to any one acquainted only with the external and generally understood features of the character of the new proprietor of the Château de Sénanges. But a few people knew Prosper Alix thoroughly, and the Marquis was one of the number; he was keen enough to know in

theory

that, in the case of a man with only one weakness, that is likely to be a very weak weakness indeed, and to apply the theory to the _avocat_. The beautiful, pious, and aristocratic mother of Paul de Sénanges--a lady to whose superiority the Marquis had rendered the distinguished testimony of his dislike, not hesitating to avow that she was "much too good for _his_ taste"--had been very fond of, and very kind to, the motherless daughter of Prosper Alix, and he held her memory in reverence which he accorded to nothing beside, human or divine, and taught his daughter the matchless worth of the friend she had lost. The Marquis knew this, and though he had little sympathy with the sentiment, he believed he might use it in the present instance to his own profit, with safety. The event proved that he was right. Private negotiations, with the manner of whose transaction we are not concerned, passed between the

avocat and the _ci-devant_ Marquis; and the young man, then leading a life in which skulking had a large share, in the vicinity of Dijon, was instructed to present himself at the Maison Alix, under the designation of Henri Glaire, and in the character of an artist in house-decoration. The circumstances of his life in childhood and boyhood had led to his being almost safe from recognition as a man at Lyons; and, indeed, all the people on the _ci-devant_ visiting-list of the château had been pretty nearly killed off, in the noble and patriotic ardor of the revolutionary times.

The ancient Château de Sénanges was proudly placed near the summit of the "Holy Hill," and had suffered terrible depredations when the church at Fourvières was sacked, and the shrine desecrated with that ingenious impiety which is characteristic of the French; but it still retained somewhat of its former heavy grandeur. The château was much too large for the needs, tastes, or ambition of its present owner, who was too wise, if even he had been of an ostentatious disposition, not to have sedulously resisted its promptings. The jealousy of the nation of brothers was easily excited, and departure from simplicity and frugality

was apt to be commented upon by domiciliary visits, and the eager imposition of fanciful fines. That portion of the vast building occupied by Prosper Alix and the _citoyenne_ Berthe, his daughter, presented an appearance of well-to-do comfort and modest ease, which contrasted with the grandiose proportions and the elaborate decorations of the wide corridors, huge flat staircases, and lofty panelled apartments. The _avocat_ and his daughter lived quietly in the old place, hoping, after a general fashion, for better times, but not finding the present very bad; the father becoming day by day more pleasant with his bargain, the daughter growing fonder of the great house, and the noble _bocages_, of the scrappy little vineyards, struggling for existence on the sunny hill-side, and the place where the famous shrine had been. They had done it much damage; they had parted its riches among them; the once ever-open doors were shut, and the worn flags were untrodden; but nothing could degrade it, nothing could destroy what had been, in the mind of Berthe Alix, who was as devout as her father was unconcernedly unbelieving. Berthe was wonderfully well educated for a Frenchwoman of that period, and surprisingly handsome for a Frenchwoman of any. Not too tall to offend the taste of her compatriots, and not too short to be dignified and graceful, she had a symmetrical figure, and a small, well-poised head, whose profuse, shining, silken dark-brown hair she wore as nature intended, in a shower of curls, never touched by the hand of the coiffeur,--curls which clustered over her brow, and fell far down on her shapely neck. Her features were fine; the eyes very dark, and the mouth very red; the complexion clear and rather pale, and the style of the face and its expression lofty. When Berthe Alix was a child, people were accustomed to say she was pretty and refined enough to belong to the aristocracy; nobody would have dared to say so now, prettiness and refinement, together with all the other virtues admitted to a place on the patriotic roll, having become national property.

Berthe loved her father dearly. She was deeply impressed with the sense of her supreme importance to him, and fully comprehended that he would be influenced by and through her when all other persuasion or argument

would be unavailing. When Prosper Alix wished and intended to do anything rather mean or selfish, he did it without letting Berthe know; and when he wished to leave undone something which he knew his daughter

would decide ought to be done, he carefully concealed from her the existence of the dilemma. Nevertheless, this system did not prevent the father and daughter being very good and even confidential friends.

Prosper Alix loved his daughter immeasurably, and respected her more than he respected any one in the world. With regard to her persevering religiousness, when such things were not only out of fashion and date, but illegal as well, he was very tolerant. Of course it was weak, and an absurdity; but every woman, even his beautiful, incomparable Berthe, was weak and absurd on some point or other; and, after all, he had come to the conclusion that the safest weakness with which a woman can be afflicted is that romantic and ridiculous *_faiblesse_* called piety. So these two lived a happy life together, Berthe's share of it being very secluded, and were wonderfully little troubled by the turbulence with which society was making its tumultuous way to the virtuous serenity of republican perfection.

The communication announcing the project of the *_ci-devant_* Marquis for the secure exportation of his nephew, and containing the skilful appeal before mentioned, grievously disturbed the tranquillity of Prosper, and was precisely one of those incidents which he would especially have liked to conceal from his daughter. But he could not do so; the appeal was too cleverly made; and utter indifference to it, utter neglect of the letter, which naturally suggested itself as the easiest means of getting rid of a difficulty, would have involved an act of direct and uncompromising dishonesty to which Prosper, though of sufficiently elastic conscience within the limit of professional gains, could not contemplate. The Château de Sénanges was indeed his own lawful property;

his without prejudice to the former owners, dispossessed by no act of his. But the *_ci-devant_* Marquis--confiding in him to an extent which

was quite astonishing, except on the _pis-aller_ theory, which is so unflattering as to be seldom accepted--announced to him the existence of a certain packet, hidden in the château, acknowledging its value, and urging the need of its safe transmission. This was not his property. He heartily wished he had never learned its existence, but wishing that was clearly of no use; then he wished the nephew of the _ci-devant_ might come soon, and take himself and the hidden wealth away with all possible speed. This latter was a more realizable desire, and Prosper settled his mind with it, communicated the interesting but decidedly dangerous secret to Berthe, received her warm sanction, and transmitted to the Marquis, by the appointed means, an assurance that his wishes should be punctually carried out. The absence of an interdiction of his visit before a certain date was to be the signal to M. Paul de Sénanges that he was to proceed to act upon his uncle's instructions; he waited the proper time, the reassuring silence was maintained unbroken, and he ultimately set forth on his journey, and accomplished it in safety.

Preparations had been made at the Maison Alix for the reception of M. Glaire, and his supposed occupation had been announced. The apartments were decorated in a heavy, gloomy style, and those of the _citoyenne_ in particular (they had been occupied by a lady who had once been designated as _feue Madame la Marquise_, but who was referred to now as _la mère du ci-devant_) were much in need of renovation. The alcove, for instance, was all that was least gay and most far from simple. The _citoyenne_ would have all that changed. On the morning of the day of the expected arrival, Berthe said to her father:

"It would seem as if the Marquis did not know the exact spot in which the packet is deposited. M. Paul's assumed character implies the necessity for a search."

M. Henri Glaire arrived at the Maison Alix, was fraternally received,

and made acquainted with the sphere of his operations. The young man had

a good deal of both ability and taste in the line he had assumed, and the part was not difficult to play. Some days were judiciously allowed to pass before the real object of the masquerade was pursued, and during that time cordial relations established themselves between the _avocat_ and his guest. The young man was handsome, elegant, engaging, with all the external advantages, and devoid of the vices, errors, and hopeless infatuated unscrupulousness, of his class; he had naturally quick intelligence, and some real knowledge and comprehension of life had been knocked into him by the hard-hitting blows of Fate. His face was like his mother's, Prosper Alix thought, and his mind and tastes were of the very pattern which, in theory, Berthe approved. Berthe, a very unconventional French girl--who thought the new era of purity, love, virtue, and disinterestedness ought to do away with marriage by barter as one of its most notable reforms, and had been disenchanted by discovering that the abolition of marriage altogether suited the taste of the incorruptible Republic better--might like, might even love, this young man. She saw so few men, and had no fancy for patriots; she would certainly be obstinate about it if she did chance to love him. This would be a nice state of affairs. This would be a pleasant consequence of the confiding request of the _ci-devant_. Prosper wished with all his heart for the arrival of the concerted signal, which should tell Henri Glaire that he might fulfil the purpose of his sojourn at the Maison Alix, and set forth for Marseilles.

But the signal did not come, and the days--long, beautiful, sunny, soothing summer-days--went on. The painting of the panels of the _citoyenne's_ apartment, which she vacated for that purpose, progressed slowly; and M. Paul de Sénanges, guided by the ground-plan, and aided by

Berthe, had discovered the spot in which the jewels of price, almost the last remnants of the princely wealth of the Sénanges, had been hidden by the _femme-de-chambre_ who had perished with her mistress, having

confided a general statement of the fact to a priest, for transmission to the Marquis. This spot had been ingeniously chosen. The sleeping-apartment of the late Marquis was extensive, lofty, and provided with an alcove of sufficiently large dimensions to have formed in itself a handsome room. This space, containing a splendid but gloomy bed, on an estrade, and hung with rich faded brocade, was divided from the general extent of the apartment by a low railing of black oak, elaborately carved, opening in the centre, and with a flat wide bar along the top, covered with crimson velvet. The curtains were contrived to hang from the ceiling, and, when let down inside the screen of railing, they matched the draperies which closed before the great stone balcony at the opposite end of the room. Since the _avocat's_ daughter had occupied this palatial chamber, the curtains of the alcove had never been drawn, and she had substituted for them a high folding screen of black-and-gold Japanese pattern, also a relic of the grand old times, which stood about six feet on the outside of the rails that shut in her bed. The floor was of shining oak, testifying to the conscientious and successful labors of successive generations of _frotteurs_ ; and on the spot where the railing of the alcove opened by a pretty quaint device sundering the intertwined arms of a pair of very chubby cherubs, a square space in the floor was also richly carved.

The seekers soon reached the end of their search. A little effort removed the square of carved oak, and underneath they found a casket, evidently of old workmanship, richly wrought in silver, much tarnished but quite intact. It was agreed that this precious deposit should be replaced, and the carved square laid down over it, until the signal for his departure should reach Paul. The little baggage which under any circumstances he could have ventured to allow himself in the dangerous journey he was to undertake, must be reduced, so as to admit of his carrying the casket without exciting suspicion.

The finding of the hidden treasure was not the first joint discovery made by the daughter of the _avocat_ and the son of the _ci-devant_. The

cogitations of Prosper Alix were very wise, very reasonable; but they were a little tardy. Before he had admitted the possibility of mischief, the mischief was done. Each had found out that the love of the other was indispensable to the happiness of life; and they had exchanged confidences, assurances, protestations, and promises, as freely, as fervently, and as hopefully, as if no such thing as a Republic, one and indivisible, with a keen scent and an unappeasable thirst for the blood of aristocrats, existed. They forgot all about "Liberty, Fraternity, and Equality"--these egotistical, narrow-minded young people;--they also forgot the characteristic alternative to those unparalleled blessings--"Death." But Prosper Alix did not forget any of these things; and his consternation, his provision of suffering for his beloved daughter, were terrible, when she told him, with a simple noble frankness which the grandes dames of the dead-and-gone time of great ladies had rarely had a chance of exhibiting, that she loved M. Paul de S nanges, and intended to marry him when the better times should come. Perhaps she meant when that alternative of death should be struck off the sacred formula;--of course she meant to marry him with the sanction of her father, which she made no doubt she should receive.

Prosper Alix was in pitiable perplexity. He could not bear to terrify his daughter by a full explanation of the danger she was incurring; he could not bear to delude her with false hope. If this young man could be got away at once safely, there was not much likelihood that he would ever be able to return to France. Would Berthe pine for him, or would she forget him, and make a rational, sensible, rich, republican marriage, which would not imperil either her reputation for pure patriotism or her father's? The latter would be the very best thing that could possibly happen, and therefore it was decidedly unwise to calculate upon it; but, after all, it was possible; and Prosper had not the courage, in such a strait, to resist the hopeful promptings of a possibility. How ardently he regretted that he had complied with the prayer of the ci-devant! When would the signal for Mr. Paul's departure come?

Prosper Alix had made many sacrifices, had exercised much self-control for his daughter's sake; but he had never sustained a more severe trial than this, never suffered more than he did now, under the strong necessity for hiding from her his absolute conviction of the impossibility of a happy result for this attachment, in that future to which the lovers looked so fearlessly. He could not even make his anxiety and apprehension known to Paul de Sénanges; for he did not believe the young man had sufficient strength of will to conceal anything so important from the keen and determined observation of Berthe.

The expected signal was not given, and the lovers were incautious. The seclusion of the Maison Alix had all the danger, as well as all the delight, of solitude, and Paul dropped his disguise too much and too often. The servants, few in number, were of the truest patriotic principles, and to some of them the denunciation of the _citoyen_, whom they condescended to serve because the sacred Revolution had not yet made them as rich as he, would have been a delightful duty, a sweet-smelling sacrifice to be laid on the altar of the country. They heard certain names and places mentioned; they perceived many things which led them to believe that Henri Glaire was not an industrial artist and pure patriot, worthy of respect, but a wretched _ci-devant_, resorting to the dignity of labor to make up for the righteous destruction of every other kind of dignity. One day a gardener, of less stoical virtue than his fellows, gave Prosper Alix a warning that the presence of a _ci-devant_ upon his premises was suspected, and that he might be certain a domiciliary visit, attended with dangerous results to himself, would soon take place. Of course the _avocat_ did not commit himself by any avowal to this lukewarm patriot; but he casually mentioned that Henri Glaire was about to take his leave. What was to be done? He must not leave the neighborhood without receiving the instructions he was awaiting; but he must leave the house, and be supposed to have gone quite away. Without any delay or hesitation,

Prosper explained the facts to Berthe and her lover, and insisted on the necessity for an instant parting. Then the courage and the readiness of the girl told. There was no crying, and very little trembling; she was strong and helpful.

"He must go to Pichon's, father," she said, "and remain there until the signal is given.--Pichon is a master-mason, Paul," she continued, turning to her lover, "and his wife was my nurse. They are avaricious people; but they are fond of me in their way, and they will shelter you faithfully enough, when they know that my father will pay them handsomely. You must go at once, unseen by the servants; they are at supper. Fetch your valise, and bring it to my room. We will put the casket in it, and such of your things as you must take out to make room for it, we can hide under the plank. My father will go with you to Pichon's, and we will communicate with you there as soon as it is safe."

Paul followed her to the large gloomy room where the treasure lay, and they took the casket from its hiding-place. It was heavy, though not large, and an awkward thing to pack away among linen in a small valise. They managed it, however, and, the brief preparation completed, the moment of parting arrived. Firmly and eloquently, though in haste, Berthe assured Paul of her changeless love and faith, and promised him to wait for him for any length of time in France, if better days should be slow of coming, or to join him in some foreign land, if they were never to come. Her father was present, full of compassion and misgiving. At length he said:

"Come, Paul, you must leave her; every moment is of importance."

The young man and his betrothed were standing on the spot whence they had taken the casket; the carved rail with the heavy curtains might have been the outer sanctuary of an altar, and they bride and bridegroom before it, with earnest, loving faces, and clasped hands.

"Farewell, Paul," said Berthe; "promise me once more, in this the moment of our parting, that you will come to me again, if you are alive, when the danger is past."

"Whether I am living or dead, Berthe," said Paul de S nanges, strongly moved by some sudden inexplicable instinct, "I will come to you again."

In a few more minutes, Prosper Alix and his guest, who carried, not without difficulty, the small but heavy leather valise, had disappeared in the distance, and Berthe was on her knees before the _prie-dieu_ of the _ci-devant_ Marquise, her face turned toward the "Holy Hill" of Fourvi res.

Pichon, _ma tre_, and his sons, _gar ons-ma ons_, were well-to-do people, rather morose, exceedingly avaricious, and of taciturn dispositions; but they were not ill spoken of by their neighbors. They had amassed a good deal of money in their time, and were just then engaged on a very lucrative job. This was the construction of several of the steep descents, by means of stairs, straight and winding, cut in the face of the _c teaux_, by which pedestrians are enabled to descend into the town. Pichon _p re_ was a _propri taire_ as well; his property was that which is now in the possession of Giraudier, _pharmacien_, premi re classe_, and which was destined to attain a sinister celebrity during his proprietorship. One of the straightest and steepest of the stairways had been cut close to the _terre_ which the mason owned, and a massive wall, destined to bound the high-road at the foot of the declivity, was in course of construction.

When Prosper Alix and Paul de S nanges reached the abode of Pichon, the master-mason, with his sons and workmen, had just completed their day's work, and were preparing to eat the supper served by the wife and mother, a tall, gaunt woman, who looked as if a more liberal scale of housekeeping would have done her good, but on whose features the

stamp

of that devouring and degrading avarice which is the commonest vice of the French peasantry, was set as plainly as on the hard faces of her husband and her sons. The avocat explained his business and introduced

his companion briefly, and awaited the reply of Pichon père without any appearance of inquietude.

"You don't run any risk," he said; "at least, you don't run any risk which I cannot make it worth your while to incur. It is not the first time you have received a temporary guest on my recommendation. You know

nothing about the citizen Glaire, except that he is recommended to you by me. I am responsible; you can, on occasion, make me so. The citizen may remain with you a short time; can hardly remain long. Say, citizen, is it agreed? I have no time to spare."

It was agreed, and Prosper Alix departed, leaving M. Paul de Sénanges, convinced that the right, indeed the only, thing had been done, and yet much troubled and depressed.

Pichon père was a short, squat, powerfully built man, verging on sixty, whose thick, dark grizzled hair, sturdy limbs, and hard hands, on which the muscles showed like cords, spoke of endurance and strength; he

was, indeed, noted in the neighborhood for those qualities. His sons resembled him slightly, and each other closely, as was natural, for they were twins. They were heavy, lumpish fellows, and they made but an ungracious return to the attempted civilities of the stranger, to whom the offer of their mother to show him his room was a decided relief. As he rose to follow the woman, Paul de Sénanges lifted his small valise with difficulty from the floor, on which he had placed it on entering the house, and carried it out of the room in both his arms. The brothers followed these movements with curiosity, and, when the door

closed behind their mother and the stranger, their eyes met.

* * * * *

Twenty-four hours had passed away, and nothing new had occurred at the Maison Alix. The servants had not expressed any curiosity respecting the departure of the citizen Glaire, no domiciliary visit had taken place, and Berthe and her father were discussing the propriety of Prosper's venturing, on the pretext of an excursion in another direction, a visit to the isolated and quiet dwelling of the master-mason. No signal had yet arrived. It was agreed that after the lapse of another day, if their tranquillity remained undisturbed, Prosper Alix should visit Paul de Sénanges. Berthe, who was silent and preoccupied, retired to her own room early, and her father, who was uneasy and apprehensive, desperately anxious for the promised communication from the Marquis, was relieved by her absence.

The moon was high in the dark sky, and her beams were flung across the polished oak floor of Berthe's bedroom, through the great window with the stone balcony, when the girl, who had gone to sleep with her lover's name upon her lips in prayer, awoke with a sudden start, and sat up in her bed. An unbearable dread was upon her; and yet she was unable to utter a cry, she was unable to make another movement. Had she heard a voice? No, no one had spoken, nor did she fancy that she heard any sound. But within her, somewhere inside her heaving bosom, something said, "Berthe!"

And she listened, and knew what it was. And it spoke, and said:

"I promised you that, living or dead, I would come to you again. And I have come to you; but not living."

She was quite awake. Even in the agony of her fear she looked around,

and tried to move her hands, to feel her dress and the bedclothes, and to fix her eyes on some familiar object, that she might satisfy herself, before this racing and beating, this whirling and yet icy chilliness of her blood should kill her outright, that she was really awake.

"I have come to you; but not living."

What an awful thing that voice speaking within her was! She tried to raise her head and to look toward the place where the moonbeams marked

bright lines upon the polished floor, which lost themselves at the foot of the Japanese screen. She forced herself to this effort, and lifted her eyes, wild and haggard with fear, and there, the moonbeams at his feet, the tall black screen behind him, she saw Paul de S nanges. She saw him; she looked at him quite steadily; she rose, slowly, with a mechanical movement, and stood upright beside her bed, clasping her forehead with her hands, and gazing at him. He stood motionless, in the dress he had worn when he took leave of her, the light-colored riding-coat of the period, with a short cape, and a large white cravat tucked into the double breast. The white muslin was flecked, and the front of the riding-coat was deeply stained, with blood. He looked at her, and she took a step forward--another--then, with a desperate effort, she dashed open the railing and flung herself on her knees before him, with her arms stretched out as if to clasp him. But he was no longer there; the moonbeams fell clear and cold upon the polished floor, and lost themselves where Berthe lay, at the foot of the screen, her head upon the ground, and every sign of life gone from her.

* * * * *

"Where is the citizen Glaire?" asked Prosper Alix of the _citoyenne_ Pichon, entering the house of the master-mason abruptly, and with a stern and threatening countenance. "I have a message for him; I must see him."

"I know nothing about him," replied the _citoyenne_, without turning in his direction, or relaxing her culinary labors. "He went away from here the next morning, and I did not trouble myself to ask where; that is his affair."

"He went away? Without letting me know! Be careful, _citoyenne_; this is a serious matter."

"So they tell me," said the woman with a grin, which was not altogether free from pain and fear; "for you! A serious thing to have a _suspect_ in your house, and palm him off on honest people. However, he went away peaceably enough when he knew we had found him out, and that we had no desire to go to prison, or worse, on his account, or yours."

She was strangely insolent, this woman, and the listener felt his helplessness; he had brought the young man there with such secrecy, he had so carefully provided for the success of concealment.

"Who carried his valise?" Prosper Alix asked her suddenly.

"How should I know?" she replied; but her hands lost their steadiness, and she upset a stew-pan; "he carried it here, didn't he? and I suppose he carried it away again."

Prosper Alix looked at her steadily--she shunned his gaze, but she showed no other sign of confusion; then horror and disgust of the woman came over him.

"I must see Pichon," he said; "where is he?"

"Where should he be but at the wall? he and the boys are working there, as always. The citizen can see them; but he will remember not to detain

them; in a little quarter of an hour the soup will be ready."

The citizen did see the master-mason and his sons, and after an interview of some duration he left the place in a state of violent agitation and complete discomfiture. The master-mason had addressed to him these words at parting:

"I assert that the man went away at his own free will; but if you do not keep very quiet, I shall deny that he came here at all--you cannot prove he did--and I will denounce you for harboring a _suspect_ and _ci-devant_ under a false name. I know a De Sénanges when I see him as well as you, citizen Alix; and, wishing M. Paul a good journey, I hope you will consider about this matter, for truly, my friend, I think you will sneeze in the sack before I shall."

* * * * *

"We must bear it, Berthe, my child," said Prosper Alix to his daughter many weeks later, when the fever had left her, and she was able to talk with her father of the mysterious and frightful events which had occurred. "We are utterly helpless. There is no proof, only the word of these wretches against mine, and certain destruction to me if I speak. We will go to Spain, and tell the Marquis all the truth, and never return, if you would rather not. But, for the rest, we must bear it."

"Yes, my father," said Berthe submissively, "I know we must; but God need not, and I don't believe He will."

The father and the daughter left France unmolested, and Berthe "bore it" as well as she could. When better times came they returned, Prosper Alix an old man, and Berthe a stern, silent, handsome woman, with whom no one

associated any notions of love or marriage. But long before their return the traditions of the Croix Rousse were enriched by circumstances which

led to that before-mentioned capital bargain made by the father of the Giraudier of the present. These circumstances were the violent death of Pichon and his two sons, who were killed by the fall of a portion of the great boundary-wall on the very day of its completion, and the discovery, close to its foundation, at the extremity of Pichon's _terre_, of the corpse of a young man attired in a light-colored riding-coat, who had been stabbed through the heart.

Berthe Alix lived alone in the Château de Sénanges, under its restored name, until she was a very old woman. She lived long enough to see the golden figure on the summit of the "Holy Hill," long enough to forget the bad old times, but not long enough to forget or cease to mourn the lover who had kept his promise, and come back to her; the lover who rested in the earth which once covered the bones of the martyrs, and who kept a place for her by his side. She has filled that place for many years. You may see it, when you look down from the second gallery of the bell-tower at Fourvières, following the bend of the outstretched golden arm of Notre Dame.

The château was pulled down some years ago, and there is no trace of its former existence among the vines.

Good times, and bad times, and again good times have come for the Croix Rousse, for Lyons, and for France, since then; but the remembrance of the treachery of Pichon & Sons, and of the retribution which at once exposed and punished their crime, outlives all changes. And once, every year, on a certain summer night, three ghostly figures are seen, by any who have courage and patience to watch for them, gliding along by the foot of the boundary-wall, two of them carrying a dangling corpse, and the other, implements for mason's work and a small leather valise. Giraudier, _pharmacien_, has never seen these ghostly figures, but he describes them with much minuteness; and only the _esprits forts_ of the Croix Rousse deny that the ghosts of Pichon & Sons are not yet laid.

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A Stable for Nightmares, by J. Sheridan Le Fanu and Charles Young, etal

AN ADJUSTMENT OF NATURE*

by O. Henry

In an art exhibition the other day I saw a painting that had been sold for \$5,000. The painter was a young scrub out of the West named Kraft, who had a favourite food and a pet theory. His pabulum was an unquenchable belief in the Unerring Artistic Adjustment of Nature. His theory was fixed around corned-beef hash with poached egg. There was a story behind the picture, so I went home and let it drip out of a fountain-pen. The idea of Kraft—but that is not the beginning of the story.

Three years ago Kraft, Bill Judkins (a poet), and I took our meals at Cypher's, on Eighth Avenue. I say "took." When we had money, Cypher got it "off of" us, as he expressed it. We had no credit; we went in, called for food and ate it. We paid or we did not pay. We had confidence in Cypher's sullenness and smouldering ferocity. Deep down in his sunless soul he was either a prince, a fool or an artist. He sat at a worm-eaten desk, covered with files of waiters' checks so old that I was sure the bottommost one was for clams that Hendrik Hudson had eaten and paid for. Cypher had the power, in common with Napoleon III. and the goggle-eyed perch, of throwing a film over his eyes, rendering opaque the windows of his soul. Once when we left him unpaid, with egregious excuses, I looked back and saw him shaking with inaudible laughter behind his film. Now and then we paid up back scores.

But the chief thing at Cypher's was Milly. Milly was a waitress. She was a grand example of Kraft's theory of the artistic adjustment of nature. She belonged, largely, to waiting, as Minerva did to the art of scrapping, or Venus to the science of serious flirtation. Pedestalled and in bronze she might have stood with the noblest of her heroic sisters as "Liver-and-Bacon Enlivening the World." She belonged to Cypher's. You expected to see her colossal figure loom through that reeking blue cloud of smoke from frying fat just as you expect the Palisades to appear through a drifting Hudson River fog. There amid the steam of vegetables and the vapours of acres of

"ham and," the crash of crockery, the clatter of steel, the screaming of "short orders," the cries of the hungry and all the horrid tumult of feeding men, surrounded by swarms of the buzzing winged beasts bequeathed us by Pharaoh, Milly steered her magnificent way like some great liner cleaving among the canoes of howling savages.

Our Goddess of Grub was built on lines so majestic that they could be followed only with awe. Her sleeves were always rolled above her elbows. She could have taken us three musketeers in her two hands and dropped us out of the window. She had seen fewer years than any of us, but she was of such superb Evehood and simplicity that she mothered us from the beginning. Cypher's store of eatables she poured out upon us with royal indifference to price and quantity, as from a cornucopia that knew no exhaustion. Her voice rang like a great silver bell; her smile was many-toothed and frequent; she seemed like a yellow sunrise on mountain tops. I never saw her but I thought of the Yosemite. And yet, somehow, I could never think of her as existing outside of Cypher's. There nature had placed her, and she had taken root and grown mightily. She seemed happy, and took her few poor dollars on Saturday nights with the flushed pleasure of a child that receives an unexpected donation.

It was Kraft who first voiced the fear that each of us must have held latently. It came up apropos, of course, of certain questions of art at which we were hammering. One of us compared the harmony existing between a Haydn symphony and pistache ice cream to the exquisite congruity between Milly and Cypher's.

"There is a certain fate hanging over Milly," said Kraft, "and if it overtakes her she is lost to Cypher's and to us."

"She will grow fat?" asked Judkins, fearsomely.

"She will go to night school and become refined?" I ventured anxiously.

"It is this," said Kraft, punctuating in a puddle of spilled coffee with a stiff forefinger. "Caesar had his Brutus—the cotton has its bollworm, the chorus girl has her Pittsburger, the summer boarder has his poison ivy, the hero has his Carnegie medal, art has its Morgan, the rose has its—"

"Speak," I interrupted, much perturbed. "You do not think that Milly will begin to lace?"

"One day," concluded Kraft, solemnly, "there will come to Cypher's for a plate of beans a millionaire lumberman from Wisconsin, and he will marry Milly."

"Never!" exclaimed Judkins and I, in horror.

"A lumberman," repeated Kraft, hoarsely.

"And a millionaire lumberman!" I sighed, despairingly.

"From Wisconsin!" groaned Judkins.

We agreed that the awful fate seemed to menace her. Few things were less improbable. Milly, like some vast virgin stretch of pine woods, was made to catch the lumberman's eye. And well we knew the habits of the Badgers, once fortune smiled upon them. Straight to New York they hie, and lay their goods at the feet of the girl who serves them beans in a beanery. Why, the alphabet itself connives. The Sunday newspaper's headliner's work is cut for him.

"Winsome Waitress Wins Wealthy Wisconsin Woodsman."

For a while we felt that Milly was on the verge of being lost to us.

It was our love of the Unerring Artistic Adjustment of Nature that inspired us. We could not give her over to a lumberman, doubly accursed by wealth

and provincialism. We shuddered to think of Milly, with her voice modulated and her elbows covered, pouring tea in the marble teepee of a tree murderer. No! In Cypher's she belonged—in the bacon smoke, the cabbage perfume, the grand, Wagnerian chorus of hurled ironstone china and rattling casters.

Our fears must have been prophetic, for on that same evening the wildwood discharged upon us Milly's preordained confiscator—our fee to adjustment and order. But Alaska and not Wisconsin bore the burden of the visitation.

We were at our supper of beef stew and dried apples when he trotted in as if on the heels of a dog team, and made one of the mess at our table. With the freedom of the camps he assaulted our ears and claimed the fellowship of men lost in the wilds of a hash house. We embraced him as a specimen, and in three minutes we had all but died for one another as friends.

He was rugged and bearded and wind-dried. He had just come off the "trail," he said, at one of the North River ferries. I fancied I could see the snow dust of Chilcoot yet powdering his shoulders. And then he strewed the table with the nuggets, stuffed ptarmigans, bead work and seal pelts of the returned Klondiker, and began to prate to us of his millions.

"Bank drafts for two millions," was his summing up, "and a thousand a day piling up from my claims. And now I want some beef stew and canned peaches. I never got off the train since I mushed out of Seattle, and I'm hungry. The stuff the niggers feed you on Pullmans don't count. You gentlemen order what you want."

And then Milly loomed up with a thousand dishes on her bare arm—loomed up big and white and pink and awful as Mount Saint Elias—with a smile like day breaking in a gulch. And the Klondiker threw down his pelts and nuggets as dross, and let his jaw fall half-way, and stared at her. You

could almost see the diamond tiaras on Milly's brow and the hand-embroidered silk Paris gowns that he meant to buy for her.

At last the bollworm had attacked the cotton—the poison ivy was reaching out its tendrils to entwine the summer boarder—the millionaire lumberman, thinly disguised as the Alaskan miner, was about to engulf our Milly and upset Nature's adjustment.

Kraft was the first to act. He leaped up and pounded the Klondiker's back. "Come out and drink," he shouted. "Drink first and eat afterward." Judkins seized one arm and I the other. Gaily, roaringly, irresistibly, in jolly-good-fellow style, we dragged him from the restaurant to a café, stuffing his pockets with his embalmed birds and indigestible nuggets.

There he rumbled a roughly good-humoured protest. "That's the girl for my money," he declared. "She can eat out of my skillet the rest of her life. Why, I never see such a fine girl. I'm going back there and ask her to marry me. I guess she won't want to sling hash any more when she sees the pile of dust I've got."

"You'll take another whiskey and milk now," Kraft persuaded, with Satan's smile. "I thought you up-country fellows were better sports."

Kraft spent his puny store of coin at the bar and then gave Judkins and me such an appealing look that we went down to the last dime we had in toasting our guest.

Then, when our ammunition was gone and the Klondiker, still somewhat sober, began to babble again of Milly, Kraft whispered into his ear such a polite, barbed insult relating to people who were miserly with their funds, that the miner crashed down handful after handful of silver and notes, calling for all the fluids in the world to drown the imputation.

Thus the work was accomplished. With his own guns we drove him from

the field. And then we had him carted to a distant small hotel and put to bed with his nuggets and baby seal-skins stuffed around him.

"He will never find Cypher's again," said Kraft. "He will propose to the first white apron he sees in a dairy restaurant to-morrow. And Milly—I mean the Natural Adjustment—is saved!"

And back to Cypher's went we three, and, finding customers scarce, we joined hands and did an Indian dance with Milly in the centre.

This, I say, happened three years ago. And about that time a little luck descended upon us three, and we were enabled to buy costlier and less wholesome food than Cypher's. Our paths separated, and I saw Kraft no more and Judkins seldom.

But, as I said, I saw a painting the other day that was sold for \$5,000. The title was "Boadicea," and the figure seemed to fill all out-of-doors. But of all the picture's admirers who stood before it, I believe I was the only one who longed for Boadicea to stalk from her frame, bringing me corned-beef hash with poached egg.

I hurried away to see Kraft. His satanic eyes were the same, his hair was worse tangled, but his clothes had been made by a tailor.

"I didn't know," I said to him.

"We've bought a cottage in the Bronx with the money," said he. "Any evening at 7."

"Then," said I, "when you led us against the lumberman—the—Klondiker—it wasn't altogether on account of the Unerring Artistic Adjustment of Nature?"

"Well, not altogether," said Kraft, with a grin.

*from The Project Gutenberg eBook, #2776
The Four Million, by O. Henry

THE SERPENT'S STORY*

by Leonid Andreyev

Hush! Hush! Hush! Come closer to me. Look into my eyes!

I always was a fascinating creature, tender, sensitive, and grateful. I was wise and I was noble. And I am so flexible in the writhing of my graceful body that it will afford you joy to watch my easy dance. Now I shall coil up into a ring, flash my scales dimly, wind myself around tenderly and clasp my steel body in my gentle, cold embraces. One in many! One in many!

Hush! Hush! Look into my eyes!

You do not like my writhing and my straight, open look? Oh, my head is heavy--therefore I sway about so quietly. Oh, my head is heavy--therefore I look so straight ahead, as I sway about. Come closer to me. Give me a little warmth; stroke my wise forehead with your fingers; in its fine outlines you will find the form of a cup into which flows wisdom, the dew of the evening-flowers. When I draw the air by my writhing, a trace is left in it--the design of the finest of webs, the web of dream-charms, the enchantment of noiseless movements, the inaudible hiss of gliding lines. I am silent and I sway myself. I look ahead and I sway myself. What strange burden am I carrying on my neck?

I love you.

I always was a fascinating creature, and loved tenderly those I loved. Come closer to me. Do you see my white, sharp, enchanting little teeth? Kissing, I used to bite. Not painfully, no--just a trifle. Caressing tenderly, I used to bite a little, until the first bright little drops appeared, until a cry came forth which sounded like the laugh produced by tickling. That was very pleasant--think not it was unpleasant; otherwise they whom I kissed would not come back for more kisses. It

is now that I can kiss only once--how sad--only once! One kiss for each--how little for a loving heart, for a sensitive soul, striving for a great union! But it is only I, the sad one, who kiss but once, and must seek love again--he knows no other love any more: to him my one, tender, nuptial kiss is inviolable and eternal. I am speaking to you frankly; and when my story is ended--I will kiss you.

I love you.

Look into my eyes. Is it not true that mine is a magnificent, a powerful look? A firm look and a straight look? And it is steadfast, like steel forced against your heart. I look ahead and sway myself, I look and I enchant; in my green eyes I gather your fear, your loving, fatigued, submissive longing. Come closer to me. Now I am a queen and you dare not

fail to see my beauty; but there was a strange time--Ah, what a strange time! Ah, what a strange time! At the mere recollection I am agitated--Ah, what a strange time! No one loved me. No one respected me. I was persecuted with cruel ferocity, trampled in the mud and jeered--Ah, what a strange time it was! One in many! One in many!

I say to you: Come closer to me.

Why did they not love me? At that time I was also a fascinating creature, but without malice; I was gentle and I danced wonderfully. But they tortured me. They burnt me with fire. Heavy and coarse beasts trampled upon me with the dull steps of terribly heavy feet; cold tusks of bloody mouths tore my tender body--and in my powerless sorrow I bit the sand, I swallowed the dust of the ground--I was dying of despair. Crushed, I was dying every day. Every day I was dying of despair. Oh, what a terrible time that was! The stupid forest has forgotten everything--it does not remember that time, but you have pity on me. Come closer to me. Have pity on me, on the offended, on the sad one, on the loving one, on the one who dances so beautifully.

I love you.

How could I defend myself? I had only my white, wonderful, sharp little teeth--they were good only for kisses. How could I defend myself? It is only now that I carry on my neck this terrible burden of a head, and my look is commanding and straight, but then my head was light and my eyes gazed meekly. Then I had no poison yet. Oh, my head is so heavy and it is hard for me to hold it up! Oh, I have grown tired of my look--two stones are in my forehead, and these are my eyes. Perhaps the glittering stones are precious--but it is hard to carry them instead of gentle eyes--they oppress my brain. It is so hard for my head! I look ahead and sway myself; I see you in a green mist--you are so far away. Come closer to me.

You see, even in sorrow I am beautiful, and my look is languid because of my love. Look into my pupil; I will narrow and widen it, and give it a peculiar glitter--the twinkling of a star at night, the playfulness of all precious stones--of diamonds, of green emeralds, of yellowish topaz, of blood-red rubies. Look into my eyes: It is I, the queen--I am crowning myself, and that which is glittering, burning and glowing--that robs you of your reason, your freedom and your life--it is poison. It is a drop of my poison.

How has it happened? I do not know. I did not bear ill-will to the living.

I lived and suffered. I was silent. I languished. I hid myself hurriedly when I could hide myself; I crawled away hastily. But they have never seen me weep--I cannot weep; and my easy dance grew ever faster and ever more beautiful. Alone in the stillness, alone in the thicket, I danced with sorrow in my heart--they despised my swift dance and would have been glad to kill me as I danced. Suddenly my head began to grow

heavy--How strange it is!--My head grew heavy. Just as small and beautiful, just as wise and beautiful, it had suddenly grown terribly heavy; it bent my neck to the ground, and caused me pain. Now I am somewhat used to it, but at first it was dreadfully awkward and painful. I thought I was sick.

And suddenly... Come closer to me. Look into my eyes. Hush! Hush! Hush!

And suddenly my look became heavy--it became fixed and strange--I was even frightened! I want to glance and turn away--but cannot. I always look straight ahead, I pierce with my eyes ever more deeply, I am as though petrified. Look into my eyes. It is as though I am petrified, as though everything I look upon is petrified. Look into my eyes.

I love you. Do not laugh at my frank story, or I shall be angry. Every hour I open my sensitive heart, for all my efforts are in vain--I am alone. My one and last kiss is full of ringing sorrow--and the one I love is not here, and I seek love again, and I tell my tale in vain--my heart cannot bare itself, and the poison torments me and my head grows heavier. Am I not beautiful in my despair? Come closer to me.

I love you.

Once I was bathing in a stagnant swamp in the forest--I love to be clean--it is a sign of noble birth, and I bathe frequently. While bathing, dancing in the water, I saw my reflection, and as always, fell in love with myself. I am so fond of the beautiful and the wise! And suddenly I saw--on my forehead, among my other inborn adornments, a new, strange sign--Was it not this sign that has brought the heaviness, the petrified look, and the sweet taste in my mouth? Here a cross is darkly outlined on my forehead--right here--look. Come closer to me. Is this not strange? But I did not understand it at that time, and I liked it. Let there be no more adornment. And on the same day, on that same

terrible day, when the cross appeared, my first kiss became also my last--my kiss became fatal. One in many! One in many!

Oh!

You love precious stones, but think, my beloved, how far more precious is a little drop of my poison. It is such a little drop.--Have you ever seen it? Never, never. But you shall find it out. Consider, my beloved, how much suffering, painful humiliation, powerless rage devoured me: I had to experience in order to bring forth this little drop. I am a queen! I am a queen! In one drop, brought forth by myself, I carry death unto the living, and my kingdom is limitless, even as grief is limitless, even as death is limitless. I am queen! My look is inexorable. My dance is terrible! I am beautiful! One in many! One in many!

Oh!

Do not fall. My story is not yet ended. Come closer to me.

And then I crawled into the stupid forest, into my green dominion.

Now it is a new way, a terrible way! I was kind like a queen; and like a queen I bowed graciously to the right and to the left. And they--they ran away! Like a queen I bowed benevolently to the right and to the left--and they, queer people--they ran away. What do you think? Why did they run away? What do you think? Look into my eyes. Do you see in them a certain glimmer and a flash? The rays of my crown blind your eyes, you are petrified, you are lost. I shall soon dance my last dance---do not fall. I shall coil into rings, I shall flash my scales dimly, and I shall clasp my steel body in my gentle, cold embraces. Here I am! Accept my only kiss, my nuptial kiss--in it is the deadly grief of all oppressed lives. One in many! One in many!

Bend down to me. I love you.

Die!

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The Crushed Flower and Other Stories, by Leonid Andreyev

MESMERIC REVELATION*

by Edgar Allan Poe

WHATEVER doubt may still envelop the _rationale_ of mesmerism, its startling _facts_ are now almost universally admitted. Of these latter, those who doubt, are your mere doubters by profession--an unprofitable and disreputable tribe. There can be no more absolute waste of time than the attempt to _prove_, at the present day, that man, by mere exercise of will, can so impress his fellow, as to cast him into an abnormal condition, of which the phenomena resemble very closely those of _death_, or at least resemble them more nearly than they do the phenomena of any other normal condition within our cognizance; that, while in this state, the person so impressed employs only with effort, and then feebly, the external organs of sense, yet perceives, with keenly refined perception, and through channels supposed unknown, matters beyond the scope of the physical organs; that, moreover, his intellectual faculties are wonderfully exalted and invigorated; that his sympathies with the person so impressing him are profound; and, finally, that his susceptibility to the impression increases with its frequency, while, in the same proportion, the peculiar phenomena elicited are more extended and more _pronounced_.

I say that these--which are the laws of mesmerism in its general features--it would be supererogation to demonstrate; nor shall I inflict upon my readers so needless a demonstration; to-day. My purpose at present is a very different one indeed. I am impelled, even in the teeth of a world of prejudice, to detail without comment the very remarkable substance of a colloquy, occurring between a sleep-waker and myself.

I had been long in the habit of mesmerizing the person in question, (Mr. Vankirk,) and the usual acute susceptibility and exaltation of the mesmeric perception had supervened. For many months he

had been laboring under confirmed phthisis, the more distressing effects of which had been relieved by my manipulations; and on the night of Wednesday, the fifteenth instant, I was summoned to his bedside.

The invalid was suffering with acute pain in the region of the heart, and breathed with great difficulty, having all the ordinary symptoms of asthma. In spasms such as these he had usually found relief from the application of mustard to the nervous centres, but to-night this had been attempted in vain.

As I entered his room he greeted me with a cheerful smile, and although evidently in much bodily pain, appeared to be, mentally, quite at ease.

"I sent for you to-night," he said, "not so much to administer to my bodily ailment, as to satisfy me concerning certain psychal impressions which, of late, have occasioned me much anxiety and surprise. I need not tell you how sceptical I have hitherto been on the topic of the soul's immortality. I cannot deny that there has always existed, as if in that very soul which I have been denying, a vague half-sentiment of its own existence. But this half-sentiment at no time amounted to conviction. With it my reason had nothing to do. All attempts at logical inquiry resulted, indeed, in leaving me more sceptical than before. I had been advised to study Cousin. I studied him in his own works as well as in those of his European and American echoes. The 'Charles Elwood' of Mr. Brownson, for example, was placed in my hands. I read it with profound attention. Throughout I found it logical, but the portions which were not _merely_ logical were unhappily the initial arguments of the disbelieving hero of the book. In his summing up it seemed evident to me that the reasoner had not even succeeded in convincing himself. His end had plainly forgotten his beginning, like the government of Trinculo. In short, I was not long in perceiving that if man is to be intellectually convinced of his own immortality, he will never be so convinced by the mere abstractions

which have been so long the fashion of the moralists of England, of France, and of Germany. Abstractions may amuse and exercise, but take no

hold on the mind. Here upon earth, at least, philosophy, I am persuaded, will always in vain call upon us to look upon qualities as things. The will may assent--the soul--the intellect, never.

"I repeat, then, that I only half felt, and never intellectually believed. But latterly there has been a certain deepening of the feeling, until it has come so nearly to resemble the acquiescence of reason, that I find it difficult to distinguish between the two. I am enabled, too, plainly to trace this effect to the mesmeric influence. I cannot better explain my meaning than by the hypothesis that the mesmeric exaltation enables me to perceive a train of ratiocination which, in my abnormal existence, convinces, but which, in full accordance with the mesmeric phenomena, does not extend, except through

its _effect_, into my normal condition. In sleep-waking, the reasoning and its conclusion--the cause and its effect--are present together. In my natural state, the cause vanishing, the effect only, and perhaps only partially, remains.

"These considerations have led me to think that some good results might ensue from a series of well-directed questions propounded to me while mesmerized. You have often observed the profound

self-cognizance evinced by the sleep-waker--the extensive knowledge he displays upon all points relating to the mesmeric condition itself; and from this self-cognizance may be deduced hints for the proper conduct of a catechism."

I consented of course to make this experiment. A few passes threw Mr. Vankirk into the mesmeric sleep. His breathing became immediately more easy, and he seemed to suffer no physical uneasiness.

The following conversation then ensued:--V. in the dialogue representing the patient, and P. myself.

P. Are you asleep?

V. Yes--no I would rather sleep more soundly.

P. [_After a few more passes._] Do you sleep now?

V. Yes.

P. How do you think your present illness will result?

V. [_After a long hesitation and speaking as if with effort_.] I must die.

P. Does the idea of death afflict you?

V. [_Very quickly_.] No--no!

P. Are you pleased with the prospect?

V. If I were awake I should like to die, but now it is no matter. The mesmeric condition is so near death as to content me.

P. I wish you would explain yourself, Mr. Vankirk.

V. I am willing to do so, but it requires more effort than I feel able to make. You do not question me properly.

P. What then shall I ask?

V. You must begin at the beginning.

P. The beginning! but where is the beginning?

V. You know that the beginning is GOD. [_This was said in a low, fluctuating tone, and with every sign of the most profound veneration_.]

P. What then is God?

V. [_Hesitating for many minutes._] I cannot tell.

P. Is not God spirit?

V. While I was awake I knew what you meant by "spirit," but now it seems only a word--such for instance as truth, beauty--a quality, I mean.

P. Is not God immaterial?

V. There is no immateriality--it is a mere word. That which is not matter, is not at all--unless qualities are things.

P. Is God, then, material?

V. No. [_This reply startled me very much._]

P. What then is he?

V. [_After a long pause, and mutteringly._] I see--but it is a thing difficult to tell. [_Another long pause._] He is not spirit, for he exists. Nor is he matter, as _you understand it_. But there are _gradations_ of matter of which man knows nothing; the grosser impelling the finer, the finer pervading the grosser. The atmosphere, for example, impels the electric principle, while the electric principle permeates the atmosphere. These gradations of matter increase in rarity or fineness, until we arrive at a matter _unparticled_--without

particles--indivisible--_one_ and here the law of impulsion and permeation is modified. The ultimate, or unparticled matter, not only permeates all things but impels all things--and thus _is_ all things within itself. This matter is God. What men attempt to embody in the word "thought," is this matter in motion.

P. The metaphysicians maintain that all action is reducible to motion and thinking, and that the latter is the origin of the former.

V. Yes; and I now see the confusion of idea. Motion is the action of _mind_ --not of _thinking_. The unparticled matter, or God, in quiescence, is (as nearly as we can conceive it) what men call mind. And the power of self-movement (equivalent in effect to human volition) is, in the unparticled matter, the result of its unity and omniprevalence; _how_ I know not, and now clearly see that I shall never know. But the unparticled matter, set in motion by a law, or quality, existing within itself, is thinking.

P. Can you give me no more precise idea of what you term the unparticled matter?

V. The matters of which man is cognizant, escape the senses in gradation. We have, for example, a metal, a piece of wood, a drop of water, the atmosphere, a gas, caloric, electricity, the luminiferous ether. Now we call all these things matter, and embrace all matter in one general definition; but in spite of this, there can be no two ideas more essentially distinct than that which we attach to a metal, and that which we attach to the luminiferous ether. When we reach the latter, we feel an almost irresistible inclination to class it with spirit, or with nihility. The only consideration which restrains us is our conception of its atomic constitution; and here, even, we have to seek aid from our notion of an atom, as something possessing in infinite minuteness, solidity, palpability, weight. Destroy the idea of the atomic constitution and we should no longer be able to regard the ether as an

entity, or at least as matter. For want of a better word we might term it spirit. Take, now, a step beyond the luminiferous ether--conceive a matter as much more rare than the ether, as this ether is more rare than the metal, and we arrive at once (in spite of all the school dogmas) at a unique mass--an unparticled matter. For although we may admit infinite littleness in the atoms themselves, the infinitude of littleness in the spaces between them is an absurdity. There will be a point--there will be a degree of rarity, at which, if the atoms are sufficiently numerous, the interspaces must vanish, and the mass absolutely coalesce. But the consideration of the atomic constitution being now taken away, the nature of the mass inevitably glides into what we conceive of spirit. It is clear, however, that it is as fully matter as before. The truth is, it is impossible to conceive spirit, since it is impossible to imagine what is not. When we flatter ourselves that we have formed its conception, we have merely deceived our understanding by the consideration of infinitely rarified matter.

P. There seems to me an insurmountable objection to the idea of absolute coalescence;--and that is the very slight resistance experienced by the heavenly bodies in their revolutions through space--a resistance now ascertained, it is true, to exist in some degree, but which is, nevertheless, so slight as to have been quite overlooked by the sagacity even of Newton. We know that the resistance of bodies is, chiefly, in proportion to their density. Absolute coalescence is absolute density. Where there are no interspaces, there can be no yielding. An ether, absolutely dense, would put an infinitely more effectual stop to the progress of a star than would an ether of adamant or of iron.

V. Your objection is answered with an ease which is nearly in the ratio of its apparent unanswerability.--As regards the progress of the star, it can make no difference whether the star passes through the ether or the ether through it. There is no astronomical error more unaccountable than that which reconciles the known retardation of the

comets with the idea of their passage through an ether: for, however rare this ether be supposed, it would put a stop to all sidereal revolution in a very far briefer period than has been admitted by those astronomers who have endeavored to slur over a point which they found it impossible to comprehend. The retardation actually experienced is, on the other hand, about that which might be expected from the _friction_ of the ether in the instantaneous passage through the orb. In the one case, the retarding force is momentary and complete within itself--in the other it is endlessly accumulative.

P. But in all this--in this identification of mere matter with God--is there nothing of irreverence? [_I was forced to repeat this question before the sleep-waker fully comprehended my meaning_.]

V. Can you say _why_ matter should be less revered than mind? But you forget that the matter of which I speak is, in all respects, the very "mind" or "spirit" of the schools, so far as regards its high capacities, and is, moreover, the "matter" of these schools at the same time. God, with all the powers attributed to spirit, is but the perfection of matter.

P. You assert, then, that the unparticled matter, in motion, is thought?

V. In general, this motion is the universal thought of the universal mind. This thought creates. All created things are but the thoughts of God.

P. You say, "in general."

V. Yes. The universal mind is God. For new individualities, _matter_ is necessary.

P. But you now speak of "mind" and "matter" as do the metaphysicians.

V. Yes--to avoid confusion. When I say "mind," I mean the unparticled or ultimate matter; by "matter," I intend all else.

P. You were saying that "for new individualities matter is necessary."

V. Yes; for mind, existing unincorporate, is merely God. To create individual, thinking beings, it was necessary to incarnate portions of the divine mind. Thus man is individualized. Divested of corporate investiture, he were God. Now, the particular motion of the incarnated portions of the unparticled matter is the thought of man; as the motion of the whole is that of God.

P. You say that divested of the body man will be God?

V. [_After much hesitation._] I could not have said this; it is an absurdity.

P. [_Referring to my notes._] You _did_ say that "divested of corporate investiture man were God."

V. And this is true. Man thus divested _would be_ God--would be unindividualized. But he can never be thus divested--at least never _will be_--else we must imagine an action of God returning upon itself--a purposeless and futile action. Man is a creature. Creatures are thoughts of God. It is the nature of thought to be irrevocable.

P. I do not comprehend. You say that man will never put off the body?

V. I say that he will never be bodiless.

P. Explain.

V. There are two bodies--the rudimental and the complete;

corresponding with the two conditions of the worm and the butterfly. What we call "death," is but the painful metamorphosis. Our present incarnation is progressive, preparatory, temporary. Our future is perfected, ultimate, immortal. The ultimate life is the full design.

P. But of the worm's metamorphosis we are palpably cognizant.

V. _We_, certainly--but not the worm. The matter of which our rudimental body is composed, is within the ken of the organs of that body; or, more distinctly, our rudimental organs are adapted to the matter of which is formed the rudimental body; but not to that of which the ultimate is composed. The ultimate body thus escapes our rudimental senses, and we perceive only the shell which falls, in decaying, from the inner form; not that inner form itself; but this inner form, as well as the shell, is appreciable by those who have already acquired the ultimate life.

P. You have often said that the mesmeric state very nearly resembles death. How is this?

V. When I say that it resembles death, I mean that it resembles the ultimate life; for when I am entranced the senses of my rudimental life are in abeyance, and I perceive external things directly, without organs, through a medium which I shall employ in the ultimate, unorganized life.

P. Unorganized?

V. Yes; organs are contrivances by which the individual is brought into sensible relation with particular classes and forms of matter, to the exclusion of other classes and forms. The organs of man are adapted to his rudimental condition, and to that only; his ultimate condition, being unorganized, is of unlimited comprehension in all points but one--the nature of the volition of God--that is to say, the motion of

the unparticled matter. You will have a distinct idea of the ultimate body by conceiving it to be entire brain. This it is _not_; but a conception of this nature will bring you near a comprehension of what it _is_. A luminous body imparts vibration to the luminiferous ether. The vibrations generate similar ones within the retina; these again communicate similar ones to the optic nerve. The nerve conveys similar ones to the brain; the brain, also, similar ones to the unparticled matter which permeates it. The motion of this latter is thought, of which perception is the first undulation. This is the mode by which the mind of the rudimental life communicates with the external world; and this external world is, to the rudimental life, limited, through the idiosyncrasy of its organs. But in the ultimate, unorganized life, the external world reaches the whole body, (which is of a substance having affinity to brain, as I have said,) with no other intervention than that of an infinitely rarer ether than even the luminiferous; and to this ether--in unison with it--the whole body vibrates, setting in motion the unparticled matter which permeates it. It is to the absence of idiosyncratic organs, therefore, that we must attribute the nearly unlimited perception of the ultimate life. To rudimental beings, organs are the cages necessary to confine them until fledged.

P. You speak of rudimental "beings." Are there other rudimental thinking beings than man?

V. The multitudinous conglomeration of rare matter into nebulæ, planets, suns, and other bodies which are neither nebulæ, suns, nor planets, is for the sole purpose of supplying _pabulum_ for the idiosyncrasy of the organs of an infinity of rudimental beings. But for the necessity of the rudimental, prior to the ultimate life, there would have been no bodies such as these. Each of these is tenanted by a distinct variety of organic, rudimental, thinking creatures. In all, the organs vary with the features of the place tenanted. At death, or metamorphosis, these creatures, enjoying the ultimate life--immortality--and cognizant of all secrets but _the one_, act all

things and pass everywhere by mere volition:--indwelling, not the stars, which to us seem the sole palpabilities, and for the accommodation of which we blindly deem space created--but that SPACE itself--that infinity of which the truly substantive vastness swallows up the star-shadows--blotting them out as non-entities from the perception of the angels.

P. You say that "but for the _necessity_ of the rudimental life" there would have been no stars. But why this necessity?

V. In the inorganic life, as well as in the inorganic matter generally, there is nothing to impede the action of one simple _unique_ law--the Divine Volition. With the view of producing impediment, the organic life and matter, (complex, substantial, and law-encumbered,) were contrived.

P. But again--why need this impediment have been produced?

V. The result of law inviolate is perfection--right--negative happiness. The result of law violate is imperfection, wrong, positive pain. Through the impediments afforded by the number, complexity, and substantiality of the laws of organic life and matter, the violation of law is rendered, to a certain extent, practicable. Thus pain, which in the inorganic life is impossible, is possible in the organic.

P. But to what good end is pain thus rendered possible?

V. All things are either good or bad by comparison. A sufficient analysis will show that pleasure, in all cases, is but the contrast of pain. _Positive_ pleasure is a mere idea. To be happy at any one point we must have suffered at the same. Never to suffer would have been never

to have been blessed. But it has been shown that, in the inorganic life, pain cannot be thus the necessity for the organic. The pain of the

primitive life of Earth, is the sole basis of the bliss of the ultimate life in Heaven.

P. Still, there is one of your expressions which I find it impossible to comprehend--"the truly _substantive_ vastness of infinity."

V. This, probably, is because you have no sufficiently generic conception of the term "_substance_" itself. We must not regard it as a quality, but as a sentiment:--it is the perception, in thinking beings, of the adaptation of matter to their organization. There are many things on the Earth, which would be nihility to the inhabitants of Venus--many things visible and tangible in Venus, which we could not be brought to appreciate as existing at all. But to the inorganic beings--to the angels--the whole of the unparticled matter is substance--that is to say, the whole of what we term "space" is to them the truest substantiality;--the stars, meantime, through what we consider their materiality, escaping the angelic sense, just in proportion as the unparticled matter, through what we consider its immateriality, eludes the organic.

As the sleep-waker pronounced these latter words, in a feeble tone, I observed on his countenance a singular expression, which somewhat alarmed me, and induced me to awake him at once. No sooner had I done this, than, with a bright smile irradiating all his features, he fell back upon his pillow and expired. I noticed that in less than a minute afterward his corpse had all the stern rigidity of stone. His brow was of the coldness of ice. Thus, ordinarily, should it have appeared, only after long pressure from Azrael's hand. Had the sleep-waker, indeed, during the latter portion of his discourse, been addressing me from out the region of the shadows?

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The Works of Edgar Allan Poe, Vol II, by Edgar Allan Poe

AT THE DIP OF THE ROAD.*

by Mary Louisa Molesworth

Have I ever seen a ghost?

I do not know.

That is the only reply I can truthfully make to the question now-a-days so often asked. And sometimes, if inquirers care to hear more, I go on to tell them the one experience which makes it impossible for me to reply positively either in the affirmative or negative, and restricts me to "I do not know".

This was the story.

I was staying with relations in the country. Not a very isolated or out-of-the-way part of the world, and yet rather inconvenient of access by the railway. For the nearest station was six miles off. Though the family I was visiting were nearly connected with me I did not know much of their home or its neighbourhood, as the head of the house, an uncle of mine by marriage, had only come into the property a year or two previously to the date of which I am writing, through the death of an elder brother.

It was a nice place. A good comfortable old house, a prosperous, satisfactory estate. Everything about it was in good order, from the farmers, who always paid their rents, to the shooting, which was always good; from the vineries, which were noted, to the woods, where the earliest primroses in all the country side were yearly to be found.

And my uncle and aunt and their family deserved these pleasant things and made a good use of them.

But there was a touch of the commonplace about it all. There was nothing

picturesque or romantic. The country was flat though fertile, the house, though old, was conveniently modern in its arrangements, airy, cheery, and bright.

"Not even a ghost, or the shadow of one," I remember saying one day with a faint grumble.

"Ah, well--as to that," said my uncle, "perhaps we----" but just then something interrupted him, and I forgot his unfinished speech.

Into the happy party of which for the time being I was one, there fell one morning a sudden thunderbolt of calamity. The post brought news of the alarming illness of the eldest daughter--Frances, married a year or two ago and living, as the crow flies, at no very great distance. But as the crow flies is not always as the railroad runs, and to reach the Aldoyns' home from Fawne Court, my uncle's place, was a complicated business--it was scarcely possible to go and return in a day.

"Can one of you come over?" wrote the young husband. "She is already out of danger, but longing to see her mother or one of you. She is worrying about the baby"--a child of a few months old--"and wishing for nurse."

We looked at each other.

"Nurse must go at once," said my uncle to me, as the eldest of the party. Perhaps I should here say that I am a widow, though not old, and with no close ties or responsibilities. "But for your aunt it is impossible."

"Quite so," I agreed. For she was at the moment painfully lamed by rheumatism.

"And the other girls are almost too young at such a crisis," my uncle

continued. "Would you, Charlotte----" and he hesitated. "It would be such a comfort to have personal news of her."

"Of course I will go," I said. "Nurse and I can start at once. I will leave her there, and return alone, to give you, I have no doubt, better news of poor Francie."

He was full of gratitude. So were they all.

"Don't hurry back to-night," said my uncle. "Stay till--till Monday if you like." But I could not promise. I knew they would be glad of news at once, and in a small house like my cousin's, at such a time, an inmate the more might be inconvenient.

"I will try to return to-night," I said. And as I sprang into the carriage I added: "Send to Moore to meet the last train, unless I telegraph to the contrary."

My uncle nodded; the boys called after me, "All right;" the old butler bowed assent, and I was satisfied.

Nurse and I reached our journey's end promptly, considering the four or five junctions at which we had to change carriages. But on the whole "going," the trains fitted astonishingly.

We found Frances better, delighted to see us, eager for news of her mother, and, finally, disposed to sleep peacefully now that she knew that there was an experienced person in charge. And both she and her husband thanked me so much that I felt ashamed of the little I had done. Mr. Aldoyne begged me to stay till Monday; but the house was upset, and I was eager to carry back my good tidings.

"They are meeting me at Moore by the last train," I said. "No, thank you, I think it is best to go."

"You will have an uncomfortable journey," he replied. "It is Saturday, and the trains will be late, and the stations crowded with the market people. It will be horrid for you, Charlotte."

But I persisted.

It was rather horrid. And it was queer. There was a sort of uncanny eeriness about that Saturday evening's journey that I have never forgotten. The season was very early spring. It was not very cold, but chilly and ungenial. And there were such odd sorts of people about. I travelled second-class; for I am not rich, and I am very independent. I did not want my uncle to pay my fare, for I liked the feeling of rendering him some small service in return for his steady kindness to me. The first stage of my journey was performed in the company of two old naturalists travelling to Scotland to look for some small plant which was to be found only in one spot in the Highlands. This I gathered from their talk to each other. You never saw two such extraordinary creatures as they were. They both wore black kid gloves much too large for them, and the ends of the fingers waved about like feathers.

Then followed two or three short transits, interspersed with weary waitings at stations. The last of these was the worst, and tantalising, too, for by this time I was within a few miles of Moore. The station was crowded with rough folk, all, it seemed to me, more or less tipsy. So I took refuge in a dark waiting-room on the small side line by which I was to proceed, where I felt I might have been robbed and murdered and no one the wiser.

But at last came my slow little train, and in I jumped, to jump out again still more joyfully some fifteen minutes later when we drew up at Moore.

I peered about for the carriage. It was not to be seen; only two or

three tax-carts or dog-carts, farmers' vehicles, standing about, while their owners, it was easy to hear, were drinking far more than was good for them in the taproom of the Unicorn. Thence, nevertheless--not to the taproom, but to the front of the inn--I made my way, though not undismayed by the shouts and roars breaking the stillness of the quiet night. "Was the Fawne Court carriage not here?" I asked.

The landlady was a good-natured woman, especially civil to any member of the "Court" family. But she shook her head.

"No, no carriage had been down to-day. There must have been some mistake."

There was nothing for it but to wait till she could somehow or other disinter a fly and a horse, and, worst of all a driver. For the "men" she had to call were all rather--"well, ma'am, you see it's Saturday night. We weren't expecting any one."

And when, after waiting half an hour, the fly at last emerged, my heart almost failed me. Even before he drove out of the yard, it was very plain that if ever we reached Fawne Court alive, it would certainly be more thanks to good luck than to the driver's management.

But the horse was old and the man had a sort of instinct about him. We got on all right till we were more than half way to our journey's end. The road was straight and the moonlight bright, especially after we had passed a certain corner, and got well out of the shade of the trees which skirted the first part of the way.

Just past this turn there came a dip in the road. It went down, down gradually, for a quarter of a mile or more, and I looked up anxiously, fearful of the horse taking advantage of the slope. But no, he jogged on, if possible more slowly than before, though new terrors assailed me

when I saw that the driver was now fast asleep, his head swaying from side to side with extraordinary regularity. After a bit I grew easier again; he seemed to keep his equilibrium, and I looked out at the side window on the moon-flooded landscape, with some interest. I had never seen brighter moonlight.

Suddenly from out of the intense stillness and loneliness a figure, a human figure, became visible. It was that of a man, a young and active man, running along the footpath a few feet to our left, apparently from some whim, keeping pace with the fly. My first feeling was of satisfaction that I was no longer alone, at the tender mercies of my stupefied charioteer. But, as I gazed, a slight misgiving came over me. Who could it be running along this lonely road so late, and what was his motive in keeping up with us so steadily. It almost seemed as if he had been waiting for us, yet that, of course, was impossible. He was not very highwayman-like certainly; he was well-dressed--neatly-dressed that is to say, like a superior gamekeeper--his figure was remarkably good, tall and slight, and he ran gracefully. But there was something queer about him, and suddenly the curiosity that had mingled in my observation of him was entirely submerged in alarm, when I saw that, as he ran, he was slowly but steadily drawing nearer and nearer to the fly.

"In another moment he will be opening the door and jumping in," I thought, and I glanced before me only to see that the driver was more hopelessly asleep than before; there was no chance of his hearing if I called out. And get out I could not without attracting the strange runner's attention, for as ill-luck would have it, the window was drawn up on the right side, and I could not open the door without rattling the glass. While, worse and worse, the left hand window was down! Even that slight protection wanting!

I looked out once more. By this time the figure was close, close to the fly. Then an arm was stretched out and laid along the edge of the door, as if preparatory to opening it, and then, for the first time I saw his

face. It was a young face, but terribly, horribly pale and ghastly, and the eyes--all was so visible in the moonlight--had an expression such as I had never seen before or since. It terrified me, though afterwards on recalling it, it seemed to me that it might have been more a look of agonised appeal than of menace of any kind.

I cowered back into my corner and shut my eyes, feigning sleep. It was the only idea that occurred to me. My heart was beating like a sledge hammer. All sorts of thoughts rushed through me; among them I remember saying to myself: "He must be an escaped lunatic--his eyes are so awfully wild".

How long I sat thus I don't know--whenever I dared to glance out furtively he was still there. But all at once a strange feeling of relief came over me. I sat up--yes, he was gone! And though, as I took courage, I leant out and looked round in every direction, not a trace of him was to be seen, though the road and the fields were bare and clear for a long distance round.

When I got to Fawne Court I had to wake the lodge-keeper--every one was asleep. But my uncle was still up, though not expecting me, and very distressed he was at the mistake about the carriage.

"However," he concluded, "all's well that ends well. It's delightful to have your good news. But you look sadly pale and tired, Charlotte."

Then I told him of my fright--it seemed now so foolish of me, I said. But my uncle did not smile--on the contrary.

"My dear," he said. "It sounds very like our ghost, though, of course, it may have been only one of the keepers."

He told me the story. Many years ago in his grandfather's time, a young and favourite gamekeeper had been found dead in a field skirting the

road down there. There was no sign of violence upon the body; it was never explained what had killed him. But he had had in his charge a watch--a very valuable one--which his master for some reason or other had handed to him to take home to the house, not wishing to keep it on him. And when the body was found late that night, the watch was not on it. Since then, so the story goes, on a moonlight night the spirit of the poor fellow haunts the spot. It is supposed that he wants to tell what had become of his master's watch, which was never found. But no one

has ever had courage to address him.

"He never comes farther than the dip in the road," said my uncle. "If you had spoken to him, Charlotte, I wonder if he would have told you his secret?"

He spoke half laughingly, but I have never quite forgiven myself for my cowardice. It was the look in those eyes!

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